THE THEOLOGY OF A. M. FAIRBAIRN

by

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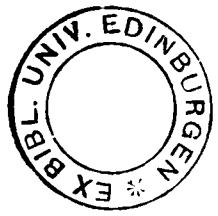

PREFACE.

Within the body of this thesis I have endeavoured to state the theological thought of Andrew Martin Fairbairn (1838-1912), successively Principal of Airedale College, Bradford, and Founder and first Principal of Mansfield College, Oxford. The introductory chapter has been written to provide the background into which to set his thought; the concluding chapter, to view his theology from the vantage of present-day theological thought. Fairbairn's contribution to theological education naturally falls outside the scope of this thesis.

I wish to thank my advisers, Dr. John Baillie and Principal W. A. Curtis of New College, Edinburgh, for the help they have given me. I am also grateful to Dr. A. Mitchell Hunter for reading chapter V.

My appreciation is also due to a number of Fairbairn's former students, who helped me considerably in gaining perspective to interpret his work. These men are: Dr. J. Vernon Bartlet, Professor Emeritus at Mansfield College, Oxford; Dr. R. S. Franks, Principal of the Western College, Bristol; Dr. A. E. Garvie, sometime Principal of Hackney and New College, London; Dr. H. Wheeler Robinson, Principal of Regent's Park College and Reader in Biblical Criticism in the University of Oxford; Dr. W. B. Selbie, sometime Principal of Mansfield College, Oxford; Dr. David Scott, Professor at the Scottish Congregational College, Edinburgh; and Mr. Edward Shillito, sometime Literary Superintendent of the London Missionary Society.

Finally I am especially grateful to the Rev. R. M. Fulton, who read the entire manuscript and gave me many helpful suggestions.

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Note on Abbreviations.

The following abbreviations of the titles of Fairbairn's books have been used in the foot-notes:

Studies in Religion and History - Studies in the Philosophy of Religion and History.

Religion in History - Religion in History and in Modern Life.

Place of Christ - The Place of Christ in Modern Theology.

Catholicism - Catholicism: Roman and Anglican.

Philosophy - The Philosophy of the Christian Religion.

Studies - Studies in Religion and Theology.

Standard abbreviations have been used in the names of Journals.

Erratum.

The mistake in paging (a jump from page 73 to page 76) made in typing has been discovered too late to correct it. This error does not, however, affect cross-references in any way.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTORY.

A. TRENDS OF THOUGHT IN VICTORIAN BRITAIN.

Estimates by contemporaries of the significance of a prominent national figure are apt to have only a temporary importance. But when Dean Rashdall spoke in 1903 of Principal A. M. Fairbairn as being, on the whole, 'our foremost English theologian',[1] he gave the estimate of a first-rate thinker on a man whose writing and speaking for some three decades had had a determining influence on theological thought. This influence was felt not only in the British Isles but also on the Continent, in France and Germany and especially in Holland.

In dealing with Fairbairn's theology, which was constructed and had its chief influence in the latter part of the nineteenth century, it is necessary when tracing its roots to consider the dominant trends which moulded Victorian thought. The three tendencies which were most determinative in shaping the late Victorian theology and philosophy in Britain had been developing under cover, as it were, until all at once they broke into broad daylight and effected a revolutic in thought. The scientific advances made in the early part of the century naturally affected the thinking world in a direct way: but with the publication of Darwin's Origin of Species (1859) British theology was turned up-side down. The idea of the continuity of history, so closely allied with the general notion of development and with the theory of evolution (which gave rise to the science of history), can be directly traced back at least a century: yet it was really not until Essays and Reviews appeared (1860) that British theologians realized its significance for religious thought and especially its importance for the interpretation of the Bible. The idealist German philosophy[2] which had its

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1. Review of Phil. in Hibbert Jl., Vol. I, 1903, p. 172.
2. As a background to nineteenth century thought, it is necessary to have some understanding of the rise and rapid development of German idealism. A brief sketch of this movement is given in Appendix A.

inception in the Kantian revolt against natural theology and dogmatic philosophy effected an entrance only very slowly into the insularity of the British Isles, not making a marked impression on English thought until after the middle of the century. To be sure, Coleridge had been strongly influenced by the new transcendentalism, and J. S. Mill considered him the principal source of the reaction in England against eighteenth century rationalism. But Coleridge's impact on thought --as mediated through such men as Maurice and Carlyle (whose real master was Goethe),--was felt rather late than early in the century, having prepared the way for the more general influx into England of German idealism. The roots of these trends must be sought, however, in the time before the Romantic movement broke with full force in England.

i. Pre-Romanticism.

The eighteenth century was marked by a dominant rationalism which arose out of the strong intellectual interest at the beginning of the century in the mathematical sciences. By rationalism we mean the placing of unbounded faith in the power of the speculative reason to attain ultimate truth by spinning it, so to speak, out of its own ratiocinative processes; a way of theorizing which in theological thought finds expression in natural theology; which is prone to be indifferent to tradition, especially of institutions; and which neglects for the most part those subliminal processes in man which are of such vital significance in human thought and action. The rationalist emphasis made itself felt in all areas of life: in the formal classicism of literature, in the hardening of manners, in the moralizing propensities of the middle classes, in a tolerance based on indifference in religion.

On the whole rationalism persisted unchecked, despite the pronounced divergent influence of Rousseau[1] and although modified or at least coloured by

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1. The central importance of Rousseau as the chief representative of this sentimental or subjective trend which culminated in full-blown Romanticism is realized when noting a few of his principles which cut radically across the age of rationalism. That man is good by nature (continued on next page)

the sentimentalism which occasionally broke into the classicism and proclivity toward speculation of the period. In literature this sentimentalism came to some significance in the nature poetry of James Thomson and the religious verse of Cowper or in the 'novels of sentiment' of Richardson and Fielding. Among the moralists the third Earl of Shaftesbury with his demonstrative emphasis on the goodness of man may be considered as a precursor of Rousseau; and the ethical theorists writing later in the century, both English and Scottish, however complete their trust in reason, clearly indicated a contrary trend of national thought in their concern with the concrete and with actual fact, <u>feeling</u> and the practical issues of the man in the street being made important--at times central--points of reference in their thinking.

In religion this trend toward sentimentalism showed itself most clearly in the rise of Pietism in Germany, and in England of Methodism and the Evangelical movement in the Church of England. 'Evangelicalism', writes Tulloch[1] in reference to the early part of the nineteenth century, 'was. . . the only type of aggressive religion then, or for some time, prevailing, although its aggressiveness was more of a practical than an intellectual kind.' Nonetheless Evangelicalism, of whatever specific kind, exerted a marked influence on religious thought, if indirectly, in its stress on what Professor Brunner calls a 'one-sided Subjectivism'. 'The experience of the individual moves commandingly into the centre of attention; pious feeling, even where theoretically this term was not used, becomes of chief importance.'[2] Without question the stress on the individual and on feeling were important forerunners of the Romantic movement.

(continued from previous page) and made vile by the institutions of civilization, that feeling should predominate over the patient investigation of fact, that the state of nature is the true state of freedom and only by sweeping away the 'artificial restrictions of an artificial society' can the best be developed in man: these principles are all immediate and powerful harbingers of Romanticism. The influence of the development of these principles, Professor Webb notes, can be seen in the French Revolution, in Kant's moral philosophy, and in the work of Goethe. (<u>A Century of Anglican Theology</u>, p.16)

1. <u>Movements of Religious Thought</u>, p. 10.
2. <u>Wahrheit als Begegnung</u>, p. 24.

ii. Romanticism.

The growing opposition to rationalism by sentimentalism reached an apogean point in the early Romanticism of the nineteenth century. The epoch was one of self-conscious art, despite the exuberance, exaltation of spirit, and sense of freedom among its leaders: for a conscious effort was made to probe the mysteries of the human soul. There was, moreover, a conscious turning to the past, for this early Romanticism realized itself to be a kind of movement of which there had been at least one great exemplar before it--the Elizabethan Age. The first Romanticism, dominant during the Napoleonic wars, mirrored the national consciousness by reacting against the revolutionary ideal which had given it much of its own motivating power. The mysticism basic in the poetical reform envisaged by Wordsworth and Coleridge and inaugurated by the publication, anonymously, of Lyrical Ballads (1798), had its roots in 'a national idealism, where a sympathetic interest in the poor enters as an element, but where there is no place for a foreign gospel of the rights of man'.[1] With the second generation of poets--Byron, Shelley, Keats--the reaction came in the form of moral revolt and a radical stress on progress and freedom which deliberately alienated itself from the mores of society. Concomitantly a group of philosophical radicals were active, and the school of Utilitarianism had its rise under the vigorous theorizing of Bentham and James Mill. Throughout, however, there was the sense of 'wonder' characteristic of the childhood of an era whose exalted spirits had experienced a rebirth. The movement received its deep impetus from the spiritual quality of the men who led it, especially the two giants, Wordsworth and Coleridge: the fresh delight in and sympathy for nature, the emphasis on passion and spontaneity, the freeing of the creative imagination, --these were but general characteristics of a tendency which received its vital stimulus from the liberation of a human nature which had had its depth and largeness starved by the artificial art and attenuated argument of the

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1. Legouis and Cazamion, A History of English Literature, Vol. II, p. 1032. I am indebted to this work for some of the material in this paragraph.

saeculum rationalisticum.

The 'spirit astir' to which Newman referred in his Apologia was, of course, Romanticism in its broad sense and liberalism in specific reference to religious thought. The Romantic renascence in literature was but part of a larger impulse which quickly had its effect on religious thought. Even Wordsworth, as Tulloch says, 'while leaving it (religious thought) in the old channels. . . gave it a richer and deeper volume'; as for Coleridge, 'later streams of religious thought are all more or less coloured by his influence'.[1] The Coleridge of Christabel and Kubla Khan became the theologian of the Aids to Reflection or the Biblical critic of Confessions of an Enquiring Spirit; thus he brought to England as early as 1825 the new spirit of German idealism which he had absorbed while studying at Göttingen. In religion he emphasized the centrality of inward experience and considered the Bible as authoritative for him in so far as it was true, in so far as it 'found' him. Here the importance of giving due importance to the place of the religious consciousness, recognized if not named by all of the evangelical movements and given a central place by Schleiermacher, was making its entrance into British religious thought.

iii. Action and Reaction in the Church.

Quite independently of movements of thought in Germany and England a line of theological development sprang up in Scotland under the stimulation of Erskine and Campbell, both of whom rebelled against the narrow dogmatisms and rigid externality of the forensic Scottish Calvinism and made the starting points of a new theology personal experience and the inner witness of the heart: Erskine in setting forth salvation not so much as a future good but rather as a potential present possession to be made actual in the building of character by means of the correlative working of God's grace and man's efforts, and Campbell in stating the significance of the Atonement as being in the example of our Lord and the moral influence of His death upon man. The influence of this new

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1. Op. cit., pp. 5, 7.

theology, especially as expressed in Erskine's The Brazen Serpent (1831) and Campbell's The Nature of the Atonement (1856) made itself felt in England, particularly through Maurice. Another 'heretical' movement in the United Secession Church was headed by James Morison and resulted in the establishment of the Evangelical Union, in which Fairbairn was cradled during his formative years.

A movement in England equally liberal if somewhat different in its approach was that known as the early Oriel or Noetic School, in which originated forces which were to continue their influence through the century upon the so-called Broad Church group in the Anglican communion,—a group characterized by its emphasis on scholarship and on liberalism, in both Church and State. Speaking generally, the Noetics attacked traditionalism and the scholastic theology on which early nineteenth century Anglican orthodoxy was based, being so positively liberal in tendency as to be anathema to conservative churchmen and having a sufficiently strong influence to induce a marked reaction in the Tractarian movement. Two men nurtured by the Oriel School were to become the protagonists in this reaction: Keble and Newman.

To speak of the rise of the High Church party as due merely to a reaction to liberalism would be to over-simplify its very complex origins. Especially in France there had been a strong Catholic revival as part of the general recoil of European thought from the rationalistic tendencies of the Aufklärung and the excesses during the Revolution and the Napoleonic era. This, together with the turning back to medievalism, a trend represented in literature most strikingly in the Waverley novels, and the increasing emphasis on the continuity of history and the importance of authority in religion as in life in general (as over against the contempt of the Encyclopedists for history or authority of any kind), had its place in the inception of the Oxford Movement. The ritualistic tendency among the Tractarians grew out of this medieval

nostalgia. Their intense dislike of emotionalism, as well as their desire to make dominant the institutional aspect of the Church and their emphasis on scholarship, were the signs of a radical turning away from the Evangelicals, who as we have seen laid chief stress on feeling and put the individual rather than the institution at the centre of the religious stage, so to speak; even as their opposition to liberalism in both Church and State was a sharp reaction against the early Noetics. The close connection among the early Tractarians to Toryism in politics and a strong conservatism in regard to social issues changed, so that late in the nineteenth century and thereafter the High Church party began to take the lead on social issues, and even in regard to Biblical criticism the Anglo-Catholics became more liberal, as we shall see, in the publication of Lux Mundi.

The influence of the sacerdotalism and authoritarianism of the Oxford Movement was far-reaching. Despite the persistent opposition of the Broad Church party, Anglicanism became throughout the century increasingly 'high'. Roman Catholicism was greatly strengthened in England throughout the century, in part because of the going over to Rome of Newman and some 150 of his followers, in part because of the gradual lifting of political restrictions from non-established churches, which gave increasing freedom to Roman Catholicism as to Nonconformity, in part, too, because of the concerted endeavour of the Roman Church to utilize its new opportunities in Britain firmly to establish itself. As Nonconformity grew in strength, it vigorously opposed the new sacerdotalism of the High Church movement with what at times was called a 'new Puritanism', which stressed preaching rather than ritual and which maintained that the source of religious authority was reason or individual religious experience rather than the church. That the High Church party itself underwent tremendous changes in the sixty years from 1830 to 1890, when Lux Mundi was published, can be realized by noting a few of the names among the two succeeding groups of 'younger' Anglo-Catholics, Samuel Wilberforce, Gladstone, and Church

among the first group, or Gore, Illingworth and Moberly among the second,—or by comparing and contrasting some of the Tracts (e. g., Baptism by Pusey, the leader of the movement, especially after Newman's capitulation to Rome, or the famous number ninety) with the essays in the later publication. The writers of Lux Mundi manifest not only the influence of Green's idealism on Anglican theology, as Professor Webb indicates,[1] but also the increasing liberalism in Biblical criticism (as in Gore's article on The Holy Spirit) and in politics.

During the middle of the century Maurice, Kingsley and Robertson, though strongly influencing the tendency toward the liberalizing of thought, may be grouped in the Broad Church succession only because their inclinations were strongly against Evangelicalism and Tractarianism, although in fact they were independents rather than party men. But their attitude was that of the Broad Church leaders, that is, 'that every new suggestion should be given a fair hearing, and that the hospitality of the Church to opinions and pious practice be as wide and comprehensive as is possible consistently with the maintenance of her spiritual identity'.[2] But the significance of the Broad Church movement lay not merely in such a neutral open-mindedness in an age of spiritual conflict and rapid intellectual change. Its most momentous specific positive influence came with the publication of Essays and Reviews (1860) by a group mostly of Oxford scholars, although this publication but made more prominent a point of view held consistently by the Broad Church leaders through the century.

The rise of Nonconformists to power in Britain during the nineteenth century was due to multivaried causes. At the beginning of the century

> 'they were still under the ban of the law; they were unable to hold any public offices; the national Universities were closed to them; they could not be married in their own churches nor be buried save with the rites of the Church of England. They were compelled to pay church rates for the support of the Establishment, and, if their worship was tolerated, it was only in specially licensed conventicles. Add to these things the fact that reaction was in full force and Dissenters everywhere denounced

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1. Webb, A Century of Anglican Theology, pp. 50-52.
2. Ibid, p. 40.

> as Jacobites and revolutionaries, and that their growth and prosperity were viewed by the authorities with alarm and hatred, and we have a condition of things that might well have led them to give up their cause in despair.' (1)

But during the century, even while political freedom was being advanced, Nonconformists through strenuous efforts gradually achieved a recognized position which by the end of the century was mostly freed of disabilities. The efforts of various Nonconformist organizations and individuals, such as John Bright, who became prominent in politics had much to do with the increasing freedom allowed to Dissenters. But the growing democratic feeling in the country, a part of the widespread movement of democracy in the century, nurtured by the poverty and general unrest early in the century following the war with France and sustained by the deplorable conditions of the factory workers, especially in the newly industrialized midlands (which only slowly were granted representation in Parliament during the century), tended more and more for a general recognition of the justice of the Nonconformist cause. The Dissenters in general were much strengthened, too, by the coming into power of a class of prosperous factory owners who tended naturally to support the Free Churches. The vigorous backing of the Reform Bill of 1832 by Nonconformists greatly increased their prestige and power. Four years earlier the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, which opened public offices to Dissenters, was but the first of the many reforms through the century which worked for greater freedom among the Nonconformist groups as well as for the advance of democratic ideals in Britain. One of the most significant of these reforms was the opening to Nonconformists in 1871 of the national Universities of Oxford and Cambridge by the passage of the Bill which 'abolished all ecclesiastical and theological tests for professors, tutors, fellows, and scholars'.[2] It has only been in the last year or two, however, that a member to the Theological Faculty has been appointed who is not a clergyman of the Church of England.[3] Through the entire century Nonconformists held a

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1. Selbie, Nonconformity, pp. 198-9.
2. Ibid, p. 209.
3. Professor C. H. Dodd at Cambridge.

conspicuous place in philanthropic work. In addition to their large part in organizing and urging forward movements for parliamentary reform and for popular education, they carried a generous share in the work of prison reform, the abolition of the slave trade, and the various Factory Acts passed through the century. It would be inaccurate to suggest that only Nonconformists were concerned with these social democratic issues: yet the words of Lord John Russell give a not untruthful indication of their leadership in the work of social amelioration. 'I know the Dissenters. They gave us the emancipation of the slave. They gave us the Reform Bill. They gave us Free Trade. And they will give us the abolition of Church Rates.'[1]

With so much action and reaction in the thought of the century, with so much general unrest and change in political and social life, there could not but be a shifting religious mood which mirrored among the people the spiritual conflict which often occurred among the thinkers of the age. It may be said that before the middle of the century spiritual struggle took place more among thinkers such as Robertson, George Eliot, or Francis Newman,—to take random examples. In the second half of the century, however, especially after 1860, there was widespread doubt of and uncertainty about religion, due in part to the disturbing effect of Biblical criticism; in part to the vague fear of German thought; in part to the advance in scientific discovery and in temporal well-being, which had brought about a spirit of practical materialism, and this in turn had tended to make religion both unnecessary and unreal and to make people indifferent to the churches.[2] The agnosticism of the speculative evolutionists had a penetrating influence, having been wholly ineffectually countered by the Conservative party in the Established Church, though more successfully combatted by the Liberal group, which also had a radical left, and by some Nonconformists. An uncritical faith in the idea of progress and an 'irreligious optimism'

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1. Quoted by Selbie, Nonconformity, p. 201.
2. Ibid, p. 255.

dominated the time.

There were some positive influences which had a steadying and clarifying effect on the vagueness and uncertainties of religious faith.[1] With his massive stress on basic morality, his eloquent defense of a spiritual interpretation of the universe against all attacks of materialism, and his impassioned plea for the ultimate meaning of life, Thomas Carlyle through the long period of his activity gave a continuous and emphatic 'everlasting Yea' in answer to religious doubt, and that despite his marked impatience with institutional religion. The poetry of Tennyson and Browning in maintaining a strong religious optimism opposed the pessimism which gradually was taking hold of the country in the latter part of the century and also emphasized the validity of what might be termed elemental religious experience in the individual. Another influence came from the several Moody and Sankey revivals, following as they did upon smaller revivals which had sprung up after the middle of the century. The Moody and Sankey meetings stirred and quickened and deepened religious life in Britain as nothing had done since the Evangelical Revival.

The period covering roughly the last forty years of the century was one of many conflicting movements: revivals, the re-awakened Oxford Movement in its second and later phases, the continuing efforts of liberal thought to effect a rapprochement between religion and science, the widespread attempts at increased social amelioration. Each movement clamoured for its own definite position in the general life and thought of the time. It was not 'a self-complacent, unquestioning age (as it has often been called). On the contrary, it was a time of widespread doubt and inquiry and of adventurous discovery in many fields. . . . .'[2]

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1. Matthew Arnold's hesitating faith exemplifies a spirit which became more prevalent toward the close of the century. His tenuous definition of religion as 'morality touched with emotion' and sad pessimism which coloured his poetry are indicative not only of his own inner uncertainty, perhaps due partly to his rebellion against Romanticism and return to classicism, but also of the general trend of the times, especially in regard to the increasing pessimism.
2. Webb, Religious Thought in England from 1850, p. 50.

iv. The Rise of the Historical Spirit.

The various movements of which I have been speaking show in their distinctive work the impress upon them of the historical spirit which rose into prominence during the nineteenth century,--a general tendency out of which grew the science of history, the comparative study of religion, and the new science of anthropology. Even as Evangelicalism with its emphasis on the individual had neglected the historical background in which man is placed, so the Tractarians with their stress on the continuity of the church,--looking back in this regard with the literary Romantics as led by Sir Walter Scott to medieval Europe,--were concerned with the historical roots of Christianity and of its institutions. In this respect, as in their emphasis on the place of authority in religion, they reacted against the tendencies associated with the French Revolution, with its ignoring of the historical and its blatant contempt for traditional authorities. The Broad Church group's similar emphasis on history (in a more constructive way because of its freer spirit of dispassionate inquiry) arose, too, out of its continuous stress on scholarship and its strong leaning to Platonism, which as Professor Webb points out,[1] has been a leading characteristic of all Anglican theology. The persistent investigation by the scientists of the natural world also contributed to the bringing into prominence of the principles of historical method.

The historical method,--which may briefly be characterized as the genetic approach to any fact or situation, which is studied as something which has grown or is growing and which can be understood only by investigating all its antecedents, the effort always being to trace processes to their beginnings,--had become increasingly significant after the unhistorical character of the early part of the eighteenth century and the revolutionary reaction against history toward its close. As early as 1748 Conyers Middleton had pointed to the need of the belief in the continuity of history, and the search for external evidences of

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1. A Century of Anglican Theology, p. 8.

revelation in Christianity for the next five or six decades acted as a stimulus to the development of the historical method, as did, too, the inquiry among moral philosophers into the origin of the moral faculty. The idea of development, so closely connected with the whole concept of history, had been suggested in various ways with increasing clarity, by Goethe in his principle of metamorphosis, by Hegel in his stress on the progressively self-revealing spirit, by Newman in his notable essay on the growth of the church. It was Hegel who had made history 'philosophically respectable' by establishing the history of philosophy as an independent science and by the dominant place which history held in his whole system.

In general the method of historical criticism was recognized as valid by the middle of the nineteenth century in Britain as it had been recognized even earlier on the Continent,--as valid in all spheres except in that of the interpretation of the Scriptures. The assumption in the first half of the century was that in the Bible is to be found 'a revelation from God of such authority that even on matters belonging to the sphere of the natural sciences or of history its statements cannot be allowed to be incorrect without thereby impairing the claim of the whole to be, in the phrase hallowed by tradition, "the Word of God"'[1]: and this general assumption continued powerfully to affect religious thought and especially popular notions about religion through the latter part of the Victorian era.

The publication in 1860 of Colenso's Introduction to the Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua and of Essays and Reviews (to which reference has already been made) was revolutionary in its effect, possibly mostly because principles of historical criticism had here been applied to the Scriptures by clergymen. These books, together with Darwin's epoch-making Origin of Species, which had appeared the year before, not only caused a furore among all church groups, but

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1. Webb, Religious Thought in England from 1850, p. 60.

definitely marked the end of an era in regard to Biblical criticism in Britain, effectually opening the way for the higher criticism of the Bible which, despite Coleridge's cautious protest against a 'dictated' Bible and the radical German criticism, had made very slow progress in England. The Bible was to be interpreted thereafter, as Jowett in Essays and Reviews suggested it should be, 'like any other book'. In this connection it must be remembered, however, that Robertson Smith was yet to stand a heresy trial in Scotland in 1875 for his critical work on the Old Testament. A movement among religious thinkers of considerable moment which grew up during the last quarter of the century because of the new stress on history was what came to be called the 'return to the historical Jesus'.

In addition to changing profoundly the whole approach to Biblical criticism, the historical method as its application spread to new fields of inquiry stimulated the rise of the Historical Science of Religion with its interest in 'the diversity of human religion and particularly in the vast field of it which lies outwith the pale of the Hebrew-Christian development'.[1] On the Continent Max Müller was one of the pioneers in this field, and it may be noted that Fairbairn was one of the first British theologians to recognize the importance of this new 'science' and to introduce its findings and its methods into the British Isles. Anthropology, which centred attention on the study of primitive culture, became a significant science during the later Victorian years, its chief British leaders having been the eminent scholars Tylor and Sir James Frazer.

v. The Scientific Advance.

The growth of the science of history was but part of a general advance of science through the nineteenth century. The work of Herschel in astronomy, of Dalton and Young in physics, of Lyell in geology, of Schwann and Schleiden in biology,—to mention but a very few of the vast number of natural scientists doing research during this period,—indicates to some small degree

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1. John Baillie, The Interpretation of Religion, p. 110.

the remarkable fecundity of scientific thought during the Victorian epoch. As the scientific point of view became established, science itself rose to a dominating position over all of life such as it had never before held. The scientific method invaded every sphere of thought, not only transforming scholarship but turning many individual thinkers from a spiritual to a completely materialistic view of the universe. Every new discovery in astronomy and geology seemed further to reduce the dignity and significance of man.[1]

The propounding by geologists of the uniformitarian theory had already caused some disquietude among religionists during the first half of the century by showing that the Old Testament cosmogony could not be taken literally, and had led them to make a last desperate effort to keep science under the control of theology. Even while this struggle was going on, science meanwhile becoming ever more independent, Darwin's Origin of Species burst with revolutionary force upon the religious thought of the day. The idea of evolution certainly was not new: in a general way it had been in the air for some time, and both Goethe and Larmarck had already applied it in the sphere of biology, whereas Comte had elaborated it in some detail in his Cours de Philosophie Positive. Darwin's work, however, especially because of the method of evolution by natural selection which he set up as a hypothesis and because of the wealth of detailed evidence he gave to substantiate his theory, startled the mid-Victorian English world by destroying (so it seemed) any possibility of belief in the creation of man.

The effects on religious thought of the increasing conflict between science and religion may be briefly summarized. The notion of a rigid system of natural laws which determined all action and interaction in the world of nature and of man gave further impetus to the prevailing tendency toward materialism which worked against a spiritual interpretation of the universe. Since all activity in the world can be explained in natural terms, any idea of a super-

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1. Cp. Elliott-Binns, Religion in the Victorian Era, pp. 160, 162.

natural being acting on nature from 'without' (as it were) is an exploded superstition, according to the late nineteenth century science.[1] In this 'closed system' there is no room for the concept of miracle and little room for the practice of prayer, except in a very restricted form. God--if God there be --does not so much work <u>on</u> nature as <u>through</u> nature, or rather, <u>in</u> nature. The doctrine of the immanence of God[2] was so elaborated and trenchantly defended that it often carried its supporters very near to or completely into pantheism. The tendency to identify nature and God raised a real problem for Christian believers, for it was difficult to conceive of the all-good and all-loving God of the Christian faith as responsible for all the waste and brutalities of natural selection. The traditional doctrines of man being made in the image of God and of original sin, moreover, were challenged by the emphasis placed upon man having 'descended' from the ape.

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1. The various scientific findings made even more prominent the monism which had an important place in philosophical thought since Schleiermacher and Hegel.
2. Professor Webb in <u>Religious Thought in England from 1850</u> shows in a closely knit exposition the development of 'immanentism' in the world of thought. He traces it as a logical outcome of the whole drift of thought from the end of the Middle Ages onwards, to find within 'this world' that which to medieval man 'had been presented as belonging to "another world" and manifested in "this world" only through a supernatural intervention from that <u>other</u>.' (p. 21) Spinoza's immanentism, 'whatever is, is of God', was carried on by Schleiermacher, who broke down the natural-supernatural dualism. Kant in making only phenomena knowable and things-in-themselves unknowable by the human mind, threw doubt on the genuine reality of 'another world'. Goethe emphasized the 'organic unity of all reality' and Hegel made the Absolute already present in human experience. In England Wordsworth's poetry was strongly immanentist; and Coleridge and Carlyle under the influence of German idealism represented the same trend, though neither brought out 'into full relief the theological immanentism which was implicit' in their point of view. Similarly the attitude of such leaders as Maurice, Westcott, and Hort, though tending in the same direction, always implied the existence of a transcendent object for religious worship. In Comte's attempt to replace Christian theism with a religion of society or science, and in J. S. Mill's ethics, which 'dispensed with all supernatural sanctions as unnecessary' (p. 64) for the moral life, the immanentism became specifically non-religious. The tendency continued in the evolutionary philosophy which followed, realistic and agnostic in Spencer, idealist in the neo-Hegelians, the trend becoming a conscious immanentism with the idealists. Professor Webb suggests four principal direct sources of the increasing immanentism throughout the century: the idealist philosophy which lay behind the Romantic movement, the idea of evolution as it became a plausible hypothesis, the new historical sense, the less individualistic type of thought and piety.

Much of the conflict between science and religion was due to arrogance and prejudice on both sides: religionists arrogant because of the traditional dominance of theology over science and because of their fear that the foundations of faith actually were being undermined; scientists arrogant because of their new sense of power at being able to 'explain' the universe and all in it. A number of religious leaders,—among them such men as Kingsley, Church and Hort,--recognized the Darwinian theory for what it was, that is, an unusually comprehensive hypothesis which gave new insight into the workings of the universe: and these men could work intelligently to defend the claims of religion at the real point of issue, namely, whether the universe should be conceived and interpreted in spiritual or naturalistic terms. This real issue between science and religion came into the open when scientists like Tyndall and Huxley or philosophical evolutionists like Spencer or Stephen carried science into the sphere of metaphysics and made pronouncements on the ultimate meaning of life and the universe: to controvert such speculations was the task of religious thinkers during the last quarter of the century.

Philosophy developed primarily along two lines in England during the Victorian era: the one, positivist and agnostic, tried on an empirical basis to establish its system on science; the other, idealist and spiritual, repudiated empiricism and carried forward the Hegelian idealism. The former originated in France early in the century, where Comte had developed with remarkable detail the system based entirely, he insisted, on science. Positivism, the religion of Humanity, never had much influence in France, but in England J. S. Mill, George Eliot and Matthew Arnold were among its adherents. Comte's chief tenets were that man can know only phenomena, such terms as cause ~~and~~ or will or force being based on illusions; that the study of contemporary society cannot be divorced from all its past history; that theology and metaphysics, in this order, are characteristic of the first two stages of civilization, but that science as it advances shall inevitably replace them, all that science

cannot explain being denied reality; that Humanity takes the place of God and altruism, of worship.

John Stuart Mill, who was considerably influenced by Comte, 'is, on the whole, the most interesting and characteristic figure in English philosophy in the nineteenth century. . . For more than a generation Mill's influence was dominant in all departments of philosophy and political thought; he had the initiative, and set the problems for his opponents as well as for his adherents.'[1] Although he maintained that knowledge can be only of sensations and not of either subject or object, he deviated from complete empiricism, at least implicitly, in two respects: in his definition of matter as 'permanent possibility of sensation' he admits an objective order which has permanence; in his conception of mind as a succession of feelings or states of consciousness, he implies the identity of a self with memory which can be conscious of such a succession. His utilitarian ethic is closely based on that of Bentham, although he makes a significant modification of the 'happiness principle'—that the quality as well as the quantity of the happiness must be taken into account. This modification, however, does not affect the validity of Pfleiderer's criticism of the Millite ethic, that it fails to explicate '<u>why</u> we feel moral obligation at all', a question which is quite distinct from the inquiry into 'the content, the <u>what</u>, of right moral conduct'.[2] Mill's agnosticism was tempered in the posthumously published essay on Theism (1874), in which he tentatively develops the idea of a God whose power over nature is limited.

In the construction of his synthetic system Spencer became the leader in the development of an evolutionary philosophy. As the final mystery of both science and religion, he predicated 'the Unknowable', to which could not be ascribed, he asserted, any moral or personal attributes, but which he nonetheless called infinite and absolute without, however, making any attempt to explain

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1. Sorley, <u>History of English Philosophy</u>, pp. 249, 261.
2. <u>Development of Theology</u>, p. 321.

how the absolute could enter into relations with the world. From the Unknowable all phenomena were derivable. His philosophy is based on the physical and biological sciences, the law of universal evolution under which he tried to organize all phenomena in a scheme which developed from simple to complex having as its modus operandi what he called the 'persistence of force'. Through his doctrine of inheritance of acquired characteristics, Spencer tried unsuccessfully to effect a reconciliation between empiricism and transcendentalism: according to this theory, which science never substantiated, he maintained that knowledge can be inherited so that it could be a priori in the mind of the individual though in the race always of necessity a posteriori.[1] His evolutionary ethic is hedonistic, much like the early utilitarian ethic; and he gave a marked laissez-faire emphasis in both his economic and political theory, due to his persistent bias to individualism.

German idealism had been seeping slowly into Britain through the nineteenth century, particularly as we have seen through the writings of Coleridge and Carlyle. Sir William Hamilton with his criticism of Kant and his cosmopolitan learning also helped to make Continental philosophy known in Britain. It was only after the mid-point of the century, however, after the influence of Hegel had already waned in Germany, that a British idealist or neo-Hegelian movement really became established, the chief protagonist of the new philosophy having been T. H. Green, although E. Caird, Bradley and Bosanquet were hardly less influential.

Green's work was chiefly constructive and designed to show that empiricism cannot account for man's having any knowledge whatever: knowledge is possible only (1) in so far as man has a continuing self, conscious of itself, which can relate sensations and (2) in so far as the world to be known is an organized unity, which in turn implies the action of all-embracing mind. With his defense, ex animo, of the spiritual nature of the world, which he

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1. Cp. Moore, Christian Thought Since Kant, pp. 162 ff.

maintained is the expression of the 'one spiritual self-conscious being', and of man, whose mind is a 'reproduction' of the eternal mind, Green sought to refute the prevailing materialism and scepticism. 'He appealed to "Englishmen under five-and-twenty" to close their Mill and Spencer and open their Kant and Hegel; and this appeal marks an epoch in English thought in the nineteenth century.'[1]

vi. The New Social Feeling.

Behind the vast social movement of the Victorian century lay at least three cardinal causes: (1) the general democratic trend, both revealed in and stimulated by the American and French Revolutions and in the strong rise of nationalism over all of Europe in 1848, which later in the century was further to work itself out in the imperialism of England, France, and Germany,--a democratic trend which in England was in evidence in the parliamentary reforms of the century and the large increase of representation in government; (2) the Industrial Revolution, which resulted on the one hand in a rapid increase of material prosperity and a general re-distribution of wealth, on the other in the rise of a factory system which quickly changed an agrarian into an urban population and caused countless social evils to spring up in the new mushroom-growth cities; (3) the change in political economic policy after the middle of the century from laissez-faire to government paternalism, from individualism to collectivism (generally speaking), a change readily observed by contrasting the political theory of Mill and Spencer with that of Green.

Of the multivaried social changes which occurred during the century, only a very few can be noted as indicative of some general tendencies: the extension of education, and the large increase of newspapers printed and read, resulting in a time of remarkable mental activity; the passing of considerable factory legislation which helped to better the plight of the working people in such matters as housing conditions, wage scales, and number of working hours;

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1. Sorley, op. cit., p. 288.

the rapid spread of Trade Unions and the beginning of the Co-operative Movement, both of which continued alongside the steady growth of socialistic ideas; the founding of Settlement Houses and of such ameliorative organizations as the Salvation Army, which showed that social work was being undertaken more by organized groups and less by isolated individuals, as had been the situation earlier in the century. Developing together with all these concrete social changes, social theory was slowly evolving, so that through this epoch we see the rise of political economy in England; and progress is made in the allied sciences of sociology and social psychology, and more attention given to the study of jurisprudence.

Although many of the leading social reformers were anti-Christian, many others received their chief impetus from the Church. Only gradually through the century, however, did the idea develop that the Church should not only palliate social evils with 'charity', but also be responsible, as an institution, for finding and striking at the roots of these evils. Fairbairn pointed out that one reason for the widespread unbelief, both critical and uncritical, was that religion 'has not prevented, or remedied in the measure man has a right to expect of it, the evils from which he suffers'.[1]

The leading features of the Victorian social changes have been characterized as 'the approximation of man to man, class to class, peer to peasant, Churchman to Nonconformist' and the position of woman to that of man.[2]

B. THE ROOTS OF FAIRBAIRN'S THEOLOGY.

Fairbairn (1838-1912) was peculiarly alive to the significance for the Christian faith of the multifarious trends of thought in his time, and he had particular aptitude for constructive interpretation. The wide and deep range of his own background, the encyclopaedic nature of his knowledge, made it

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1. Catholicism, p. 6.
2. Elliott-Binns, op. cit., p. 410.

possible for him to stress what was meaningful, vigorously to controvert what he considered subversive, and in general to be a defender of the faith whose especial delight was to take elements from modern thought which many supposed destructive to the Christian religion and show how in actuality these had an integral connection with a reasonable interpretation of it.

That there is, as Principal Garvie suggests,[1] 'no revival of Fairbairn's theology' in our own time may be due in part to the contemporary nature of much of his writing, in which he purposely made it relevant for specific issues of his day; due in part, too, to his invincible faith in human reason, in a somewhat restricted sense, which would be considered subversive by many modern theologians who have been attempting to disenfranchise reason. Withal Fairbairn made a lasting contribution to religious thought which is not entirely irrelevant for our day. The emphasis he placed on history, for example, and the way in which he rooted his theology in history, would be a salutary corrective to what has been termed the 'historical scepticism'[2] of the dialectic theologians. Later I shall try to indicate what is of permanent value in Fairbairn's religious thought. In this introductory chapter I shall consider only the general background (Part A) and the roots (Part B) of his constructive work. In view of the excellent definitive biography of Fairbairn written by Principal W. B. Selbie, it will not be necessary to burden this thesis with biographical data, except in so far as they have specific bearing upon the development of his theology.

i. Early Formative Experiences.

The vibrant Christian faith of his mother was a highly significant intellectual and spiritual influence on Fairbairn. While discussing the doctrine of the Incarnation of our Lord in one of his books, he breaks into the exposition with a personal experience[3] in which he acknowledges his obligation to his

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1. "Dr. Fairbairn and Dr. Forsyth", Christian World, Nov. 17, 1938, p. 9.
2. D. M. Baillie in an address, "The Jesus of History and the Word of God".
3. Place of Christ, p. 475.

maternal parentage.

> 'One of the things time has made most obvious to me is this: --that of all the human persons that have contributed to the shaping of the character which is as destiny, the mightiest was that of an obscure man who died years before I was born. But his daughter was my mother; and the daughter so loved and revered the father, so remembered his sayings, so understood his mind, so believed the faith that ruled and guided him, that she had no higher thought for her son than to make him such a man as her father had been. And so, invisible as he was, he became the real parent of the spirit and character of the man who now writes this book.'

In another connection he relates that when he was born his mother said, 'This is to be a man for God', and holding this hope ever before him she reared him as one who had already been consecrated.[1]

The effect on Fairbairn of being a member in a Scottish family[2] which had produced twelve ministers in two generations cannot be over-stressed. The 'Scotsman's love for the intricacies of philosophical and theological speculation',[3] together with the deep fervour springing out of his personal, evangelical religious experience, are in evidence throughout all of his work. Going to work at ten years of age, he read and studied by night for himself until nearly twenty, when he entered Edinburgh University and the Evangelical Union Academy. The erudition he later attained was dependent largely on his own efforts. When twenty-two years of age he was still very backward in his education, 'and in some respects was still doing the work of a fourth-form boy at a public school'.[4] During his three years at these two institutions but especially during his twelve-year pastorate at Bathgate, broken by one year's study in Germany, he laid the broad, deep foundation of the learning which

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1. In writing about Barrie's Margaret Ogilvy, Fairbairn said that 'he could hardly read it because of another and to him grander and sweeter figure'. Quoted in Life, pp. 2-3.
2. Fairbairn's father is described as a 'miller and a typical Scotchman of his class, a man of grit and conscience, with a mind to work and a deeply religious nature'. (Life, p. 2.) But his mother had the most determinative influence on his character.
3. Selbie, Andrew Martin Fairbairn, 1838-1938, Cong'l Quat., Vol. XVI, No. 4, Oct., 1938, p. 395.
4. Life, p. 24.

undergirded and made significant all his later theological work.

The influence of three men in the formative years of Fairbairn's life was of particular importance. The first was the minister of an Evangelical Union Church in Leith, the Rev. Joseph Boyle, whose church Fairbairn joined while living in Edinburgh because he was attracted by its broader and more gracious type of religion than that taught in the more rigid Calvinist Secession Church of which his parents were members. It was under Mr. Boyle's tutelage and 'quickening influence' that Fairbairn began the study of Greek and other subjects ancillary to the work of the ministry when he decided to enter the Evangelical Union ministry.

The second man was John Stuart Blackie, professor of Greek in Edinburgh University, who inspired in Fairbairn a high ideal of scholarship but whose more determinative influence lay in inculcating a deep interest in Hellenism. Out of this association came the stimulus to study Greek literature and culture which later was to blossom into Fairbairn's rich background in Greek thought. Here too may have been born the initial interest in the comparative study of religions, the continued study of which throughout his life was to prove of such significant value in the formulation of Fairbairn's theology.

Leaving Presbyterianism and joining a tiny, unpopular and much misunderstood denomination 'which was outside the pale of brotherhood'[1] brought Fairbairn into contact with the man he called 'master and friend'[2] and who had much to do with the shaping of his character. This was James Morison, the leader and founder of the Evangelical Union. From Morison's indefatigable industry and high standard of scholarship Fairbairn received much direct stimulation while at the Union Academy in Glasgow. But the general background of Morison as heresiarch and his courageous stand in the controversy in which he was finally ousted from the United Secession ministry must have left even a deeper impression on young Fairbairn, who saw the marks of the years in the older

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1. Life, p. 52.
2. Fairbairn in his Introduction to O. Smeaton's Principal James Morison, p. xv.

man and realized that the sustained doctrinal conflict had placed them there. Fairbairn's own later vigour in tenaciously sustaining controversy over theological and ecclesiastical issues must have received its initial impetus from the example of Morison and also from his own position in the Evangelical Union Church. Even in these early days 'he could not rest till he had convinced others, or, at least, had vindicated his position in his own eyes'.[1] Morison's reaction against the strict Calvinist theology,[2] his emphasis on the need of always considering the practical outworking of doctrine, and the necessity of the Evangelical Union to be ruggedly independent in the face of strong opposition from more powerful ecclesiastical bodies,—these all had a part in forming a mental disposition in Fairbairn which throughout his life was to make him vigorously Nonconformist and one of the strong protagonists of Independent Protestantism in modern Britain, was to lead him always to ground his exposition of religious truth in experience, and was to encourage his own strong protest against Calvinist orthodoxy which had still a considerable influence near the close of the century.[3] Yet Nonconformity for him was never merely negative in the sense of being a protest against an existing system which in its total effect he thought subversive. 'It was a living and distinctive thing, and big with promise for the future.'[4] Its principles, he felt, must ultimately prevail. That he considered himself to be in the vanguard of theological progress gave much of the confidence and buoyancy to his work in his first pastorate as well as later when his position became more established.

In 1876, when he was a candidate for the Chair of Moral Philosophy

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1. Life, p. 54.
2. Principal Garvie summarizes Morison's position with 'the three universalities, that God loves all, that Christ died for all, and that the Holy Spirit strives in all'. The Theology of Dr. Andrew Martin Fairbairn, London Quarterly, Jan., 1909, p. 28.
3. A vitriolic criticism of the Place of Christ, for example, together with Drummond's Ascent of Man, written in 1894 by Professor Watts of Assembly's College, Belfast, is largely based on the orthodox Calvinist apologetic.
4. Life, p. 55.

in the University of Aberdeen and for the same chair in the University of St. Andrews, both Crown appointments, the fact that he was a member of the strongly distrusted Evangelical Union no doubt had much to do with his defeat for both chairs, although it was generally recognized that he was unusually well qualified for either of the posts. During these days before the issue had been decided he wrote to the Secretary of State for Scotland and explained the theological position of the Evangelical Union.[1]

> 'Allow me then to say that we agree in every essential point with the theology of the Scotch churches. Our points of difference may be reduced to two. We hold (1) a universal Atonement, or the sacrificial death of Christ as a death for all; (2) a conditional election, or election to eternal life through faith. . . . .
>
> 'I may say as to ecclesiastical questions, we are not as a body voluntaries. For myself I have taken no part in any movement against the Church of Scotland, but have often spoken in its defence, believing that a national church is the ideal church, consecrating the state and connecting religion with all the forms and phases of its life.'

Such a statement is of especial interest because of the pronounced anti-Erastian views for which Fairbairn later contended with much vigour.

ii. Study in Germany.

Before this date, however, while he was still in his first pastorate at Bathgate (1860-1872), he experienced a period of spiritual crisis in which he completely lost his faith and went to Germany for a year's study in the hope of recapturing or finding a new religious conviction which could sustain him. Before the time of the crisis it was his daily habit at Bathgate to study three hours before and some five hours after breakfast, and by means of this strict regimen he had covered systematically with a remarkable degree of thoroughness the whole field of theology. His preaching, however, had continued to be evangelistic rather than theological and, as Principal Selbie suggests, 'there can be little doubt that his theological views so far had been adopted rather than assimilated'.[2] The spiritual upheaval could not but come; and when it did, he at once left his parish and went to Berlin. Years later in a Chapter of

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1. Quoted in Life, p. 75.
2. Ibid, p. 36.

Autobiography[1] he described how poignantly the experience affected him.

> 'And so, in a mood compounded partly of hope but largely of despair, I determined to seek abroad the light I could not find at home. Well do I remember the day when, feeling cheerless, forsaken of God, unpitied and unblest of men, I left the manse to take my way to Germany, never expecting to return. Life seemed a ruin; all its plans had been thrown down; and in the desolation one's best and only hope was to find in journalism a new pulpit, and in literature a mode of speech more suitable to living men. It is now forty years since I set out on that memorable quest, thinking in the bitterness of my soul that all the old loves were dead beyond any chance or hope of resurrection and return. Yet God's purpose did not fail, though the dreams of man might perish.'

At Berlin Fairbairn found the fellowship with students especially stimulating, and in the article just quoted he called them 'the truest and most efficient teachers'. From their spirit of free inquiry and outspoken frankness he learned 'that one could doubt and not sin',[2]--a lesson which when learned at once lifted from him the burden of guilt he had been carrying because of the collapse of his faith. In the academically free but religiously arid atmosphere of the German university, on the basis of his omnivorous reading and the lectures he attended, especially those of Dorner and Hengstenberg, Fairbairn's theological position became fixed in a system which was 'so complete as to be almost premature. His thought moved so easily and freely along the lines thus laid down, and opened up to him a field so vast, that he was content to confine himself to it and only reluctantly and with difficulty entered into other and less familiar spheres.'[3]

Theological thought in Germany at this time was under the dual influence of Schleiermacher and Hegel, although this influence was no longer in its heyday. The emphasis in theology was Christological and historical, the stress on Christology naturally working itself out in criticism which sought to find the historic Person as He had been. In criticism the Tübingen School was breaking up, Strauss had just published the new edition of the Leben Jesu, and

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1. Cont. Rev., vol. 91, Apr., 1907, p. 558.
2. Ibid, pp. 559, 560.
3. Life, p. 41.

Ritschl's book indicating his break with the Tübingen School had just appeared.

> 'Underneath all these questions, and unifying all,'--Fairbairn wrote of this period,--'was the notion that Christianity was a system of ideas; or, to speak with Hegel, it was a form of thought, though it lived in a realm where conceptions were figurate and language symbolical.' (1)

Dorner himself belonged to the Vermittlung School, that is mediating between Schleiermacher's and the orthodox theology, and at the same time seeking a rapprochement between philosophy and theology. The anthropocentric trend, a general characteristic of the nineteenth century, appeared in the application of the same terms to 'generic man' which orthodoxy had applied only to Christ: the distinction between God and man thus became confused. In Dorner this confusion appeared particularly in making the satisfaction for man's sin

> 'consist above all in Christ's vicarious suffering, or His entrance into humanity's consciousness of guilt and condemnation'. Thus 'he conceives it possible for Christ so to identify Himself with humanity as to share its consciousness of guilt.' (2)

Fairbairn considered of particular importance Dorner's interpretation of Deity in ethical and personal terms, God being conceived as concrete goodness, 'the parent ethical personality whose goodness determined both His own ends and those of the universe.'[3] Dorner's influence on Fairbairn was determinative, and Hengstenberg, strongly orthodox, also made a deep impression on him. That Fairbairn's Biblical criticism always remained pre-Wellhausen (even as in his theological thinking he never came to terms with Ritschl) was due to the hold Hengstenberg had on him.

The total effect of his stay in Germany Fairbairn summarized in part as follows:[4]

> 'The questions that really mattered to us had been altogether ignored (i. e., in Scotland); whether God was and what; whether He was one as a simple atom or as a complex and complicated organism; what person signified, whether it meant the same thing when applied to God, to Jesus Christ, to His natures and to man; whether God had spoken or could speak to man and what He had said; whether revealed truth could be verified and known as God's, and whether the process

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1. Chapter of Autobiography, op. cit., p. 566.
2. Franks, A History of the Doctrine of the Work of Christ, Vol. II, p. 296.
3. Chapter of Autobiography, op. cit., p. 562.
4. Ibid, pp. 568-9.

of verification involved an appeal to an infallible authority, outer or inner, and whether these two authorities did not cancel each other and so disprove revelation. What was Jesus Christ and what His work? How were we to conceive the incarnation? And why was it necessary? What security had we that the Gospels narrate the history and report the words of Jesus? or that the Epistles are the work of the men whose names they bear? What has Christianity done for man, and what can it still do for him, whether considered as an individual, a society, a state, or a race? These were some of the questions we wanted to have answered, and we doubted because no answer had been given; but the answer came in the new life created by the new light so suddenly poured into the soul. And so . . . theology was re-born and with it a new and higher faith. God seemed a nobler and more majestic Being when interpreted through the Son; the Eternal Sonship involved Eternal Fatherhood, and the old controversy as to their consubstantiality took a new meaning when the Son was conceived to be as necessary to the Deity as the Father, with an equal claim to necessary existence. Man, too, was so interpreted as to be invested with fresh majesty as an individual, and as a race he had a unity which made his fall and his redemption at once more possible and more reasonable.'

iii. Theologian, Educator, and Churchman.

After his return from Germany, Fairbairn continued his work in the Bathgate Church until 1872, when he accepted a call to the St. Paul's Street Evangelical Union Church, Aberdeen, where he stayed until, five years later, he was called to the Principalship of Airedale College, Bradford. Fairbairn had not been at Aberdeen long before he began to draw professors and students to hear his preaching, and during the years of his ministry there he exerted no small constructive influence on University life, which at the time was prevailingly agnostic in character, much as several years later he was to have a similar influence upon an agnostic Oxford by means of his Sunday evening lectures. To meet the needs of his new congregation in Aberdeen he began a series of Sunday evening meetings in which he dealt with many of the mooted questions of the time, such as 'The Conflict of Faith and Doubt', 'The Scientific and Religious Conceptions of the World--need they exclude each other?' 'The Influence of Christianity on Civilization', and many other similar subjects. In these lectures he developed a trenchant Christian apologetic, all the time drawing on his own experience with doubt for pertinent and vivid illustration. One sentence in a

letter from Professor Geddes gives some indication of the value of his work:

> 'Among the fine points of it (i. e., the lecture the previous evening) was the demonstration, which, I think, was complete, that Theism is no product of teleology, and that Tyndall's view is wrong and historically false in affirming that the notion of Design produced the idea of Theism.' [1]

While at Aberdeen Fairbairn read widely, studied intensively, especially in the field of comparative religions, and did considerable writing on theological and ecclesiastical subjects for the Contemporary Review and Expositor, as well as for the Scotsman and Aberdeen Free Press, in which his contributions were often used as lead articles. The promise he had shown at Bathgate of being a preacher with power and an able and stimulating writer came to brilliant fruition during the Aberdeen years. His ability for doing distinctively original and scholarly work was indicated in several of his magazine articles, but most markedly in his first published book, Studies in the Philosophy of Religion and History (1876), which together with his other writing and his growing fame as a leader in theological thinking, brought him the deserved reputation which resulted in his call to Airedale College. He accepted the call without hesitation, for he considered that he had been preparing himself through the years for theological teaching. During his nine years at Bradford, (1877-86), in addition to his teaching and administrative work, he delivered a series of lectures to working men which is among his very best work and threw himself vigorously into the activities of English Nonconformity, where his powers were recognized and used largely. Three years after going to Bradford he was elected chairman of the County Congregational Union, and three years later as Chairman of the Congregational Union of England and Wales. During these years his competence as an educator and churchman came to its full power. At the same time he was being prepared for the larger work he was to assume in 1886 as the founder and First principal of Mansfield College, Oxford, a position he held until his retirement in 1909, only three years before his death.

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1. Quoted in Life, p. 65.

With all of his theological activity--speaking, writing, controversy --it is most probable that Fairbairn's chief attention after leaving Aberdeen was devoted to the cause of theological education. That he was never able to complete the theological system he hoped to construct was due to the inordinate amount of time and energy given not only to the schools with which he was immediately connected, but also to his efforts in raising the general standard of theological education among Independent schools over all of Britain. Despite his multivaried activities, he always retained keen zest for teaching, and his most lasting contribution to theological thought probably is in the men he trained for the Christian preaching and teaching ministry. One of his former students gave a fine expression[1] to this idea at Bradford last November, at a gathering in celebration of the centenary of Fairbairn's birth.

> '. . . There is the fact to be faced that in spite of the great impression Fairbairn made on his own generation, his books seem to be no longer a living force in ours. There are a number of reasons for this change, into which I now propose to go.
>
> 'The first reason, entirely creditable to him and to his work is that he did it so well that many of us who were either actually his personal pupils, or else learned of him from his books as they appeared, became entirely established in the main principles for which he stood; so well established in fact that we have never gone back upon them or even needed to revive their mastery over us by fresh contact with his writings. The agreement of faith and reason, the rationality of the Christian revelation, the founding of theology upon the consciousness of Christ, the dominance of all Christian doctrine by the central doctrine of the Fatherhood of God--these are principles which have become to us more than mere intellectual principles—they have come to be part of our very selves, to be in fact, as Wordsworth expresses it,
>
> "felt in the blood, and felt along the heart",
>
> Yes, Fairbairn did his work well. It is impossible to describe to a new generation the personal impression that he made on those whom he taught or who may have listened to his speaking and preaching; but the ancient adage still comes true,
>
> "si monumentum quaeris, circumspice".
>
> The influence of Fairbairn is still to be seen in the Liberal Evangelicalism that he fostered in his pupils, and that still in spite of so many changes continues as a powerful religious and theological current among us today.'

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1. Franks, The Theology of Andrew Martin Fairbairn.

APPENDIX A. THE RISE OF GERMAN IDEALISM.

Immanuel Kant established the critical method to determine the limits of the mind's power to know the real nature of things,--this to oppose the prevailing dogmatism which assumed the ability of the mind to know things as they really are. Knowledge does not consist, as the British empiricists had maintained, in a series of sense impressions being received by an 'empty' mind; on the contrary, knowledge consists in perceptions being made intelligible through the operation of the categories of the understanding, which are logically though not chronologically prior to having any knowledge of the space and time world at all. In experience the external world, to be perceived, must be empirically real: the perceptions as made understandable by the categories, however, are only phenomena, that is, appearances of the things as they are in themselves (noumena), which cannot be known by the mind since the external world of space and time, outside experience, is transcendentally ideal.

In addition to the categories of the understanding which are constitutive in gaining knowledge through perception, Kant recognized three regulative ideas: a first cause, the soul and God. These ideas, formed by the reason as it speculates about a system which, it seems, must undergird all phenomena, cannot become knowledge. Hence these regulative ideas are not real as is the external world apprehended in phenomena, but they nonetheless are necessary guides to the understanding in its endeavour to apprehend the external world of space and time. The assertion that the mind cannot have real knowledge of these ideas destroyed at a blow the three traditional proofs for the existence of God.

Faith, to establish which (as he said) he had destroyed knowledge, Kant explicated in his second Critique, in which he gave the practical reason primacy over the theoretical and placed religion on what he considered a solid foundation of morality. The categorical imperative of the moral life which demands unconditional obedience carries within itself the necessity for man to postulate freedom, immortality and God: freedom, because the ought of the moral imperative necessarily implies a can on the part of man; immortality, because the goal set by the moral imperative--moral perfection--could be reached only if man's efforts were not bounded by the earth years; God, because a basic unitary reality must be postulated if moral activity is to be carried on at all.

Kant's successors took one part of his philosophy, that man can know only phenomena, and modified it in devious ways: Fichte into 'subjective' idealism, Schelling into 'objective' idealism, and Hegel into 'logical' or 'absolute' idealism. Fichte in seeking to eradicate the dualism in Kant's system between phenomena and noumena sacrificed the latter, all that 'is' being centred in the Ego (absolute self). The Ego in experience divides itself into self and not-self, the not-self being the world of nature which the self requires as a field of endeavour in which to obey duty and achieve moral perfection, which with Fichte as with Kant was considered the chief end of human life. Schelling in turn reacted against Fichte's notion of a nature derived from mind, and claimed that the Absolute was manifested in both nature (or matter) and mind (or spirit), preference being given to neither. But he not only failed to distinguish between mind and nature, but tended to remove all characteristics from the Absolute, which because of its being isolated from the world could be apprehended by man, according to Schelling, only in an immediate intuition.

For Hegel the idea of apprehending the Absolute by intuition was absurd. The Absolute can be sought only in the careful scrutiny of mind and nature, by which means it will be found that both mind and nature are but manifestations, in their historical unfolding, of the Absolute. The Absolute, in fact, has its very being in this self-manifestation. Kant's two worlds of phenomenal and noumenal Hegel brought together into a strict monism. 'For him it was necessary to show that the kingdoms of nature and spirit are one, in spite of all their antagonisms; nay, it was necessary for him to show that this antagonism itself is the manifestation of their unity.'(1) This unity was to be achieved by the dialectic method, whereby pairs of opposites, whether simple or complex, were to be locked together in an all-embracing synthesis. Through the use of the dialectic method the mind, by following its own laws, can discover all of reality since, in his well-known dictum, the real is the rational and the rational is the real.

Schleiermacher, commonly known as the father of modern theology because of his great systematic work, The Christian Faith, gave a marked Romantic impetus to theology by his emphasis on feeling and on the inwardness of religious experience. Although he is not in the direct line of German idealists, he is considered here because of his profound influence on all nineteenth century theology. In philosophy he mediated between the realistic and idealistic elements in Kant's system. For Schleiermacher knowledge is phenomenal, and 'his epistemology distinguishes between the form and material of knowledge, the former (concepts and judgments) being given in the "intellectual function" and the latter through sensuous perception'. (2) In his early writing he made much of the religious consciousness in man, which, he claimed, formed the basis for the different religions in the world as it manifested itself in various ways. 'If man is not one with the Eternal in the unity of intuition and feeling which is immediate, he remains, in the unity of consciousness which is derived, for ever apart.'(3) This single sentence shows the pantheistic tendency which always touched his theology, as well as its predominant subjectivism. His philosophical idea of God as the principle of unity between real and ideal is carried over into his theology in his doctrine of the Christian God, who is without distinct attributes, though One who can be worshipped as a personal Being. He inclined to think of Christ as the archetypal personality in history, His perfect God-consciousness making Him unique among men; but he also lays strong stress on Christ as Redeemer, and makes redemption the end-all of the Christian religion. Although he continues to make the religious consciousness, which of necessity is the concern of the individual, the centre of faith, he emphasizes at the same time the vital importance of the Church as a fellowship of believers and so in part 'escapes from the perils of his own subjectivism'.(4) Possibly most characteristic of his whole system is his definition of religion as the pious feeling of dependence on God which develops within a particular Church at a specific time.

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1. E. Caird, Hegel, p. 128.
2. Selbie, art. in E. R. E. on Schleiermacher, Vol. 11, p. 237.
3. Quoted by Selbie, Ibid, p. 238, from Reden, tr. Oman, p. 40.
4. Mackintosh, Types of Modern Theology, p. 74.

CHAPTER II. FAIRBAIRN'S ATTITUDE TO RELIGION IN GENERAL.

i. What is Religion?

All of Fairbairn's thinking about man in relation to the universe in which he lives started from the fundamental conviction that man is by nature religious. Atheism, he asserted, is never of nature, always of art. It is never found among primitive tribes, but only among sophisticated peoples who must persuade themselves into it.

This conviction--that man is inescapably religious--was supported by two others. The first he stated as historical fact: that no tribes, however primitive, have been discovered without some expression of religious faith as part of their life's routine. The other stemmed from his repudiation of Cartesian subjectivism: for he held that man cannot become self-conscious without at the same moment being conscious of not-self. In religion the Thou of Heaven stood over against the I of earth.

Since Fairbairn could speak of religion in general, it is obvious that he thought of Christianity as set among other historical religions, all expressing in different ways the same inherent impulse, all of which could be investigated and appreciated within their own native setting. Religion so understood, as present among all peoples and as expressed in multifarious ways, he defined as 'the relation of man as spirit to the creative and universal and regnant Spirit, under whatever form he may conceive Him'.[1]

But religion must always be considered as an activity of the whole man: for Fairbairn held that all those views of religion which departmentalized man, so to say, were partial. Those men who endeavoured to read religion in exclusive terms of intellect, feeling or conduct were simply on the wrong track, since man cannot be divided up in this way. He quoted with disapproval the words of Jacobi, 'I believe; by my faith I am a Christian; by my reason I am a heathen.'[2]

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1. Catholicism, pp. 16-7.
2. Religion in History, p. 80.

Fairbairn maintained that so to outlaw reason would make religion fugitive: indeed religion could not be at all without reason, since thought is active in every human experience. 'Where there is no knowledge the highest, if not the sole, reality is absent.'[1] Some ideas of, some knowledge about the object of religious faith must be a necessary part of the experience,--but not the whole of it, as Hegel had believed.

Similarly Fairbairn showed how the attempt has been made to interpret religion wholly in terms of feeling, Schleiermacher's feeling of dependence and (in his own day) Spencer's feeling of wonder before the Unknown being notable examples. Of course he granted that feeling makes up part of the religious consciousness, since man as religious <u>feels</u> himself in relation to a supernatural power or powers. But feeling is not all, for man cannot conceive himself as so related without being conscious of constraint to act in accordance with the will of that Other. Fairbairn contended that both Kant and Matthew Arnold were wrong in holding morality to be the whole of religion: but he himself insisted that it is an essential part. Actually he steadily maintained that all three--reason, feeling, conduct--'are fused in one vital moment',[2] even if many times (especially in polemical writing) he tended to make reason the most determinative. In his own words:[3]

> 'Religion, indeed, is too large and rich a thing to be defined by any single term or reduced to any single element, whether intellectual, emotional, or moral; it too completely covers and comprehends the whole nature of man to be denoted by a name borrowed from a section of his experience, or from one department of his rational activity.'

Since religion is ubiquitous, present wherever man is found because it is native to him, Fairbairn argued that the various attempts made in the nineteenth century to 'explain away' religion were of necessity futile. The religious idea creeps back into thinking because it is always 'there', as it were, however carefully the attempt be made to exclude it. Even when religion

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1. <u>Philosophy</u>, p. 57.
2. Mackintosh, <u>Christian Apprehension of God</u>, p. 29.
3. <u>Catholicism</u>, p. 15.

is denied, there develop what Fairbairn called artificial or fictitious religions which spring out of the imagination of some individual and which purport to be ideal substitutes for religion, and yet which always set up an object of worship to replace the one excluded. As examples of the fictitious religions he cited particularly the apotheosis of nature (Universum) by Strauss when he tried to establish a new faith in an impersonal universe which had no place in it for personal Deity, and the apotheosis of Man in Comte's religion of humanity, where le grand Etre was made the object of worship.[1] The Unbewusstes of von Hartmann and the Unknown of Spencer, Fairbairn placed in this same general category. In regard to all such apparent negations of religion Fairbairn roundly asked:[2]

> 'For what is the Agnostic but a man who confesses that there are ideas which he will not name but cannot escape from--ideas that he must disguise in order that he may reason concerning them?'

Since Fairbairn maintained, then, that man bears the image of God and hence lives always 'in relation', he opposed with vigour those naturalistic accounts of religion which would explain it either in subjectivist or sociological terms. Because of the vast amount of anthropological research being done in his day, much of the discussion on this general subject centred about the origin of religion.

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1. Fairbairn held Positivism to be unsound in its apotheosis of man because it negated spirit or reason, without which no constructive interpretation of the universe is possible at all; because it maintained that the sensuously perceived alone is real, but no adequate theory of knowledge can be constructed on empiricism; because its system failed to do justice to the facts of history, especially in regard to the origin of religion; finally, because its personification of race can in no way be considered an actual substitute for religion, since such a personification cannot claim man's reverence and hence cannot command his conscience. Yet Fairbairn named the Cours de Philosophie Positive one of the 'greatest books' of the century.
2. Philosophy, p. 197. Fairbairn also pointed out that 'agnosticism is as fatal to science as to religion, for to attempt to explain the becoming of the world on the basis of absolute nescience as to the primary and efficient cause is to attempt to make science stand upon a principle that declares knowledge vain, and therefore science impossible'. (City of God, p. 265.)

ii. The Origin of Religion.

The first published article[1] which brought Fairbairn fame was concerned with the birth of religion in man. Although research in anthropology and the comparative study of religions in the past half century has superseded many of the specific facts from which he developed his theories, yet on the basis of the facts at his command he drew some strikingly original generalizations, some of which are still valid. Several of these conclusions are especially notable in view of recent anthropological study. He traced, for example, the roots of religion in man to a 'primitive theism' in which an important factor was the sense of moral obligation. He insisted, moreover, that religion originated not in fear, but in the consciousness on the part of man of relationship with an 'Other' who was worshipped as a Being who welcomed familiar intercourse with man. An emphasis which has been given persistently by religionists[2] in the face of ethnological and psychological studies was also made by Fairbairn, namely, that the real nature of religion can be determined more clearly from studying its later developments than its primitive beginnings.

> 'For it (religion) can be explained only as it is traced to causes which are as common and as constant as itself, which operate even more powerfully in the civilized than in the savage state, and do so because the civilized man is a truer type of humanity, because he is more of a man, than the savage.' (3)

At least by implication he suggested, too, that religion to be understood at all must be studied (as we say today) from 'within' faith.

In tracing the birth of religion in the soul of man, he naturally maintained that religion did not originate in a 'primitive revelation', in the sense of a written record or oral tradition. Yet he stressed that religion can never at any time be a 'one-sided' matter, but always involves relation

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1. "The Idea of God: Its Genesis and Development", first published in Cont. Rev., 1871; in 1876 the article appeared in Studies in Religion and History, pp. 3-57.
2. 'Our best clue to the understanding of the rise of religious faith in the racial soul is our knowledge of how it arises in our own souls.' (John Baillie, Interpretation of Religion, p. 171.)
3. Philosophy, p. 215.

with some Other. He criticised sharply the natural histories of religion which sought to account for the origin of religion by an evolutionary principle 'enacted and administered without any conscious moral law-giver'.[1] Against this notion Fairbairn argued that if man were atheistic by nature there would be no conceivable way in which religion could be 'planted' in him. Actually he held that religion is native to man, that man cannot be man—at the least cannot be rational man—without being religious. In short, he stressed that God has manifested Himself to all men: He has written His Name on their hearts and 'from the Name and the necessity of finding Him whose Name it is, man has never been able, nor indeed wanted to escape'.[2] Within the local factors which have made for variegation among different peoples in the expression of this inherent religion, the 'universal Spirit' lives and moves.

In Fairbairn's view, then, man is so constituted that he cannot be self-conscious without at the same time being conscious of relationship with a not-Self. In the article mentioned above he developed the idea that self-consciousness and consciousness of obligation arise together. Since consciousness of obligation presupposes consciousness of relation with a not-Self, the genesis of the idea of God is traceable to the same moment as the genesis of the idea of self. God is One whose 'Thou stood over against his (man's) I'[3] and to Him obedience was due. Later in his most matured book Fairbairn further developed this idea, although he no longer emphasized the moral factor involved; but he pointed out that religion originates among man in his being conscious of relation to suprasensible Being and in this consciousness finding expression in beliefs, customs, and rites. However rude the forms or crude the ideas in which religion originates, it is the supernatural that man conceives.

> 'The living heart of his belief is the theistic idea; the form in which he expresses it is the accident of time and place, marking the stage and quality of his culture, and connoting the conditions—climatic, geographical, ethical and political—under which he has lived. The form is, as it were, the double of the world he lives in—therefore the creation

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1. Studies in Religion and History, p. 6.
2. Philosophy, p. 225.
3. Studies in Religion and History, p. 38.

> of experience: but the matter is the double of the spirit he is—therefore the product of his own transcendency. His religion is made up, then, of two constituents (i) the substantive or ideal, i. e., the conception of the transcendental, the supernatural, or the divine, which is a product of thought working on the phenomena it perceives; and (ii) the formal or real, i. e., the terms or vehicles which embody his ideas, the stories, rites, and customs that come out of his own experience, both outer and inner.' (1)

Between this early and late writing, his emphasis has shifted from the moral to the intellectual factor primarily involved in the birth of religion in man. Nonetheless Fairbairn continued to object to any interpretation of this consciousness of suprasensible Being (the 'subjective' part of religion) in terms of a faculty psychology: to say that it has its inception in the intellect, or the emotions, or conscience is but to impoverish it and try to analyze what is in essence unanalyzable,—the whole man as 'reasonable Spirit', as 'exercised reason'. Furthermore he maintained that the 'objective' part of religion—beliefs, customs and rites—could not have developed out of primitive speculation, in a 'subjective process worked by an unconscious dialectic',[2] as the evolutionists (notably Spencer) were contending. There must be an Other in this dialectic which becomes religion, since religion is in essence a mutual relation. This Other Fairbairn explained in idealist terms as being 'universal Reason', with which man is one, or at least which 'illuminates' the human intellect.[3] That is to say, religion originates in this dialectic between God immanent in man and man's consciousness of the presence of God within himself.

In all his writing in regard to the origin of religion, even the earliest, Fairbairn stressed that many of the processes out of which naturalistic thinkers claimed that religion developed were actually set in motion by speculation about primitive belief, and in many instances deteriorations of it. Thus the theogonic process which resulted in the rise of sacerdotalism and such processes as hero-worship (resulting in apotheoses) or ancestor-worship (Spencer's favorite notion about the birth of religion) were not primitive.[4] Nor is the

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1. Philosophy, p. 212. 2. Ibid, p. 202.
3. At times Fairbairn identified divine and human reason: at times not.
4. This criticism is sustained by recent palaeanthropological evidence.

development of mythologies, whether solar, floral, animal, cosmogonic, historical or ancestral—the terms are Fairbairn's—primitive, but the result of speculation about faith already present in man.

The natural historians of religion, moreover, maintained that the causes of man's earliest faith were delusions due to ignorance, fears or dreams, --and this idea, together with the 'ghost' theory of the rise of religion, is linked closely to the ancestor-worship theory. Fairbairn held such theories to be wholly fallacious, since resolving religious ideas into impressions of sense and hence failing to account for man's faculty or tendency to believe in invisible beings, which clearly enough shows that the constitutive element (as he kept reiterating in his writing) is what mind brings to nature, not what nature gives to mind.

Fairbairn further inveighed against the tendency of the evolutionists to be radically unhistorical and to become metaphysical when they were purporting to be making a scientific investigation of the origin of religion. Thus Spencer could never have conceived the 'ghost' theory which forms the basis of his sociology, Fairbairn pointed out, if he had thoroughly studied even one historical religion. Spencer, again, when he spoke of primitive man's beliefs as 'mistaken inferences' about familiar phenomena which were outgrown as man advanced, was but propounding what Fairbairn called 'an evolution from consciousness'[1] and had moved out of the sphere of science into that of metaphysics. More generally, Fairbairn's criticism of natural historians of religion was that they tended to derogate religion because of the mean and barbarous ways in which it had often been expressed among primitive peoples: the significant fact, however, is that religion has persisted even while all the time giving up beliefs and customs as it refined itself and found fitter forms of expression. While the form changed, the matter and substance of religion remained through all ages, Fairbairn argued; and this essence of religion, its substantive or ideal constituent, originated in the primitive theism native to man. In the relation

1. Philosophy, p. 208.

which is religion, however, he held that God and not man takes the initiative. 'His action precedes and underlies ours.'[1] Thus revelation is essential to the being of religion.

iii. Revelation.

The recent attempt to draw natural knowledge into the concept of revelation would have been repudiated by Fairbairn. His position rather was that there is natural knowledge and both general and special revelation (of course he did not use these terms). That is to say, he maintained that man with his unaided reason can discover some knowledge of God: but he applies the concept of revelation only to religious knowledge, specific knowledge about the character of God as disclosed partially in all the positive religions, but most fully in Christianity.[2]

In modern theological thought it is becoming more generally held that knowledge of God can come only as He reveals Himself; in fact, man is considered to be dependent on God all the time not only for knowledge of Him and of the universe, but for his own very being as man. But Fairbairn inclined strongly toward the Arminian notion that man is rather more than relatively independent of God.[3] In his view, then, man by the exercise of his own faculties can discover truth about nature and God, and nothing he can discover by his own unaided faculties can rightly be termed revelation. Strictly speaking, revelation in Fairbairn's use of the term is testimony from God concerning His own nature,—'truths' about God,—testimony which completes the knowledge of God which man has already derived through speculating about the natural world, the course of history, and his own place in the realms of nature and history.

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1. Catholicism, p. 18.
2. Cp. the symposium, Revelation, ed. by John Baillie and Hugh Martin. Fairbairn's point of view is most closely related to that stated in Chapter vi, written by W. M. Horton.
3. In speaking of the work of Christ, Fairbairn says that 'He made man stand upright before God, conscious of his dignity. It does not become a being of infinite promise to lie prone in the dust, even before the Infinite Majesty'. (Philosophy, p. 544.)

That is to say, Fairbairn considered that man can deduce the idea of God from discovering design in nature, purpose in history, and conscience within himself.[1] To quote his own words:

> 'Revelation, then, can only concern what is so above nature as to be beyond the power of man to discover or of nature to disclose; in other words, it must relate to God, proceed from Him, and be concerned with Him.'

Thus Fairbairn stood solidly on the Medieval Synthesis: that God is, the unaided reason can discover; what He is, can be learned only through revelation. Of course he maintained, as did the medieval theologians, that reason is the gift of God: but it works (as we say) on its own, whereas revelation takes place through the direct action of God's grace, man apprehending it by means of faith, which is also God's gift. He further asserted that man 'can never without reason either know or accept'[2] revelation. Fairbairn's view might be expressed thus: it is to reason, by grace through faith, that revelation comes.

The distinction between knowledge discoverable by reason and knowledge received through revelation delimited for Fairbairn (of course) the difference between natural and revealed theology. By means of the former man gains natural knowledge of God through the interaction between man's 'regressive and analytical' thought and God's works; thus man learns of God immanent,—the Cause, Law and End of the universe. By means of supernatural revelation man is shown the Godhead,—God transcendent, as He is in Himself.

In Fairbairn's view, then, 'revelation does not create the belief in God',[3] since philosophy can reach such belief as the end result of a speculative process. But the philosophical idea of God is abstract and hence incomplete, can form at best but the 'first chapter' of a constructive theology. For constructive theology must derive its subject-matter from religion, where God has been worshipped before He has become the object of thought, where God is

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1. Place of Christ, p. 387. 2. Ibid, p. 511. 3. Ibid, p. 403.

not an abstract conception but a living, personal Being. Thus theology draws its subject-matter from religion, to the very being of which revelation is essential. Fairbairn pointed out that this is true not only of religions which have written revelations, for the idea of revelation (or divination) is as old as religion itself: that God can and does communicate with man is involved in the birth of religion in the human soul.

> 'Religion may be described as man's consciousness of supernatural relations, or his belief in the reciprocal activities of his own spirit and the Divine. The activity of the Divine is creative and communicative, of the human is receptive and responsive.' (1)

Fairbairn thought of revelation, then, as the testimony of God about Himself given to man, its medium being history and human experience. Christ thus takes His place as the supreme revelation, since so related to God as to be able to show Him forth as He really is and so a part of the human race as to be able to enter into experience and to hold a consummate place in its history. But 'men had known God and believed in Him before Christ came, as they still do where they have never heard of Him'.[2] This approach shows that Fairbairn did not follow the trend of thought which led in the Ritschlian school, for example, to a 'Christocentricism' which 'would scarcely allow that the religion mediated through Christ and the religion not so mediated were species of the same genus'.[3] But he constantly asserted the conviction that since all truth is of God, the truth in any religion must be there by His action and express will. It follows that he did not conceive Christianity as a 'sport' (so to say) among religions, but rather the apogean expression of a line of development common to all peoples. This tendency had found its inception in the very nature of man, inasmuch as man could become self-conscious only as he became conscious at the same time of an Other who is God. But the line of development had branched as

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1. Place of Christ, p. 493.
2. Philosophy, p. 540.
3. Webb, Religious Thought in England from 1850, p. 166-7.

it found expression in the life of different peoples; and the chief tributary was that in which the Christian religion had its rise and which eventually came to carry within itself all that was good and true in all the religions.

Fairbairn conceived his whole purpose to be that of discovering 'in man's religions the story of his quest after God, but no less of God's quest after him'.[1] Out of the former investigation his theism developed; out of the latter, his concept of revelation and his placing of Christianity as a centre about which other religions naturally grouped themselves. Clearly enough this whole trend of study sprang out of the development of the historical method in the nineteenth century.

But if God reveals Himself to man through history and his experience, Fairbairn held that the record of such revelation is authoritative in religion. It is authoritative, since the revelation of God is no less direct to the person who reads, though mediated through the written word, than to him who wrote that word. Thus he maintained that revelation in the word comes to the person of faith with 'mediated immediacy'.[2] In this sense the record of revelation can itself be the medium of revelation. Fairbairn expressed this idea in telling phrases.[3]

> 'The man who has most clearly and certainly heard God has done more than hear Him for himself; he has heard Him for the world, and the world ought to be able to hear God in the man. And may not the word which God has spoken to another become a word which God speaks directly to me, yet which I never should have heard but for the older man of finer ear and clearer soul?. . . It is true that they (i. e., the 'words') must come to every later as they came to the first conscience, directly from God; but old words, when He speaks, become new, often with a spirit and life proportioned to their age.'

The Christian revelation in the Bible, viewed in this light, cannot be considered as anything rigidly or formally fixed in static form; for Fairbairn maintained that though the writers of the record may have been inspired in some special way, yet the inspiration of the men who read is as 'intrinsic

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1. Philosophy, p. x.
2. This illuminating phrase comes to me from Professor John Baillie.
3. Place of Christ, pp. 495-6.

and integral an element in the idea of revelation as the inspiration of the men who wrote' since 'in revelation the living God speaks, not simply has spoken, to living man'.[1] Thus he considered the Bible as authoritative because through its portrayal of the consciousness of Christ, God speaks creatively to the Church and to all Christians.

Fairbairn's idea of revelation carried with it certain implications. He thought of the Bible as a book 'open' to the higher criticism, in so far as critics were seeking the truth which is of God; and it mattered not where that truth be discovered, in whatever criticism or philosophy or religion. Furthermore he did not hold that the Biblical revelation was in any sense exclusive, since it did not contradict the revelation of God to every man, but special only because the most universal, the consummation (in Christ) of all revelation. Although he placed emphasis on thinking of the Bible as an authority in religion, it was the Bible considered not as a book, but as revelation: hence its authority is direct (as it were) and not dependent on tradition. Revelation moreover is essentially a 'spiritual experience', not a canonized book, and must rely on the Holy Spirit for its continuance. Although he granted that the medium for the Spirit and the Word is the Church, he insisted, in accordance with his basic principle of ecclesiology, that the Church must depend for its being on the Spirit and the Word, not they on the Church.

iv. Christianity among the Historical Religions.

Because of his deep grounding in the historical method, Fairbairn became in England a marked influence away from the unhistorical approach to Christianity and the 'evidential' theology, and toward theological inquiry based on the historical and hence in the critical method. The attention he gave to the historical setting of religion, moreover, centred his interest in the comparative study of religions and anthropology, out of which, as they

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1. Place of Christ, p. 498.

developed in concomitance with the more general historical method, evolved the so-called 'science of religion' toward the latter part of the Victorian era. Out of his comprehensive study in this field grew the conviction 'that Christianity stood among the religions which must be historically investigated and philosophically construed'.[1]

This basic emphasis on the significance of all the historical religions as a necessary background to the proper understanding of any of them was more closely akin to Müller's dictum ('Wer eine Religion kennt, kennt keine') than to Harnack's ('Wer diese Religion kennt, kennt alle'); for Fairbairn held that only after all the religions were investigated was the validity of Christianity's claim to be the ideal universal religion discovered.[2] As he thought of natural religion as the necessary precursor to revealed, so for the most part he held the notion characteristic of his generation that all 'lower religions' lead up to the supreme consummation in Christianity.[3] It was furthermore generally recognized by his contemporaries that Fairbairn had made a signal contribution in the comparative field by his sympathetic interpretation of Buddhism. He was one of the first theologians to stress that branding Buddhism as atheistic was being truer to the letter than the spirit of that

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1. Philosophy, p. ix.
2. Selbie in speaking of the great influence of Fairbairn's first published book (Studies in Religion and History) writes that Fairbairn was among the first in Britain to use the work of men like Muir, Tiele, Max Müller, and Chantepie de la Saussaye, 'and to show its intimate bearing on theological and religious conceptions'. 'One result of the publication of the book was an entirely new appreciation by orthodox theologians in this country of the importance of the history and philosophy of religion and of the comparative study of religions. For the effect of this in widening our conception of religion itself and of its place and function in human development we are largely indebted to Fairbairn's work.' (Life, pp. 76, 79.)
   The quotations from Müller and Harnack I have taken from John Baillie, Interpretation of Religion, pp. 120, 121.
3. Cp. Storr, Development of English Theology, p. 14. '. . . dominated as we are to-day by the thought of development, we study the evolution of religion and interpret earlier and lower faiths as leading up to the Christus Consummator, as prophetic of the more perfect expression of the religious principles found in Christianity. The specific theology of Christianity loses much of its meaning and value if it is not treated in genetic relationship with other religions.'

religion, since the Buddha by the moral depth of his system showed himself to be theistic even while in his teaching he repudiated belief in God.

Fairbairn, then, gave considerable attention to the historical religions, since for him Christianity must be historically investigated in its setting among the religions, even though he held it equally true that 'the Son of God holds in His pierced hands the keys of all the religions, explains all the factors of their being and all the persons through whom they have been realized'.[1]

In dealing with the religion of Israel, he never does full justice to it as the cradle of the religion of Christ. He maintained, for instance, that monotheism did not come into being in Judaism, which he considered to be most aptly characterized by the term Henotheism; and he referred several times to the religion of the Old Testament as 'the old Judaic Deism', where 'God and the world were so divided that it in a sense perished in His presence and lived only by His will'.[2] In the religion of Israel he stressed especially that here an universal idea of God was nurtured and received its apogean expression in a particularism bound by the institutions and customs of a local, tribal people. Withal the idea of God developed: and even though the Hebrew people could conceive of Jahweh only as their God, yet their obedience to Him was personal and moral as well as ceremonial, as was most often the case with particularistic religion where cultus dominated faith. Although Jahweh came to be worshipped as the God of every individual, wherever he might live, the universal idea which Israel cherished never became a reality for her. Even when our Lord came and placed this jewel of Hebraic faith into its proper universal setting, Fairbairn recounted how Israel repudiated what seemed the obvious implications of the pregnant faith she had jealously guarded through the centuries. These implications she repudiated because she could not de-nationalize that faith.

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1. Philosophy, p. x.
2. Place of Christ, p. 80. Cf. also pp. 379, 383.

The important division in the historical religions for Fairbairn's thesis is that between spontaneous and founded religions. Since Fairbairn maintained (as we have seen) that man is religious by nature, he grouped those religions as spontaneous which spring up, apparently without a special stimulus, as a necessary part of man's life. Over against these he set the founded or personal religions whose beginnings can be traced directly to a creative religious genius and to beliefs about his person and work,--'religion whose ultimate truth is an historical person speculatively construed'.[1] The former Fairbairn termed apotheoses of nature, the latter, of personality. But without spontaneous religion as substructure, he held that the founded religion cannot come into being.

Buddhism, Christianity and Islam are the three faiths which Fairbairn classified as founded or personal religions. The sect established by Gautama became the religion of Buddhism, Fairbairn explained, through the two-fold process of mythologizing and speculating. After the Buddha's death he came to be interpreted by his followers as the 'personified beneficence of the universe',[2] the standard and ideal for human conduct. Of Islam Fairbairn spoke as an absolute book religion, having been established on an apotheosis of the Word. But Mohammed as God's prophet was considered by his followers to be unique among men in the sense that he was without an equal: to doubt him was thought tantamount to doubting God. Thus each of these religions rests on the substructure of a spontaneous religion which has been re-vitalized and materially re-formed by a creative personality whose person and work, in turn, have been interpreted and speculatively construed by his followers. Fairbairn noted especially that the reformer is changed into the founder of a religion by the action of his people: thus the historical value of the founder, as it were, is transmuted into the ideal value.

Is the relation of Christ to Christianity substantially parallel

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1. Philosophy, p. 265.
2. Ibid, pp. 275-6.

to that of the Buddha and Mohammed to the religions they founded? Fairbairn implied that it is, and drew up canons of criticism[1] on the basis of his interpretation of Buddhism and Islam which he said we should not hesitate to apply to Christianity. He did not apply them himself, however, except in the most general way; and after stating them he sketched the historical figure of Jesus by means of the customary exegetical approach[2] to the Synoptic Gospels. The partial answer which he gave to the question suggested is two-fold. (1) The relation of our Lord to Christianity is different from that of Gautama to Buddhism or Mohammed to Islam because these are positive religions, established on laws set forth by the founders; but Christianity is a personal religion, and its adherents live by faith in a person and His teaching must always be secondary. (2) The interpretation of Gautama by his people was essentially different from the conception he had of his own work and mission; but the Christian Apostles' interpretation of our Lord but fulfilled the idea He had of His own Person.

Fairbairn's general approach to Christianity is thus seen to be the characteristic view of romanticism as it developed through the century. Schleiermacher made this approach when he attempted to find the 'religion among the religions'. Lessing, too, had contributed to this trend, with his notion of the education of the human race through progressive revelation: hence he had stressed tolerance toward all religions,—expressing the idea dramatically in Nathan, der Weise,—since all had had a share in this education. Fairbairn did not, however, follow the tendency, led especially by Max Müller, of seeking to extract (so to speak) the 'highest common denominator' from all the religions, this highest common factor being then considered the distilled

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1. These canons of criticism were five in number: (1) The Founder and the religion are closely interrelated. (2) The Founder has a historical and ideal significance for both the religion and for thought in general. (3) The historical person of the Founder determines the form of the religion, whereas (4) the ideal significance of his person determines his essential value for religion. (5) The Founder's mind must be immortalized.
2. See Additional Note A, p. 55.

essence of religion, although his thought is coloured by this notion. For the most part he maintained that each of the historical religions was unique in its own way, Christianity, however, being the only religion which could substantiate its claim to be the sole universal religion.

v. Reason and Authority.

Fairbairn's efforts were directed to establishing the entire rationality of faith. In part this was due to the dominant position which Spencer's system held in England, with its interpretation of the Ultimate in the sceptical terms of the 'Unknown' and its basic tenet that science alone can deal with the known, religion having to content itself with making conjectures about the unknown. Fairbairn held that a pessimistic philosophy such as that of Von Hartmann and the marked empirical bias of English thought in general (which of course he linked with medieval Nominalism) tended in the same sceptical direction. Moreover, the Ritschlian school in German theology exaggerated the antagonism between reason and revelation, and Fairbairn considered the influence of this school subversive when it attempted rigidly to separate the spheres of philosophy and theology.[1] All these factors, together with the Hegelian mould of his mind, led Fairbairn to conceive reason as the architectonic power in man. At times he seemed to believe that reason could built an all-inclusive system which could embrace all of reality,--and then it is often reason conceived as Dean Inge's 'logic-chopping faculty'. But basically he maintained that theism can be firmly established by reason: he sought to make a reasoned defense of the faith, especially against the onslaughts of the agnosticism which had so strong a hold on the late nineteenth century world.

To doubt the power of reason was for him tantamount to doubting God.

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1. Selbie quotes Fairbairn as having said of the Ritschlian philosophy: 'This philosophy is as marked a retrogression from the standpoint and spirit of the older German schools as the Ritschlian historical method is an advance on that alike of Berlin and Tübingen.' (Cong'l Quat., op. cit., p. 396.)

> 'The man who despises or distrusts the reason despises the God who gave it, and the most efficient of all the servants He has bidden work within and upon man in behalf of truth. Here, at least, it may be honestly said there is no desire to build Faith upon the negation of Reason; where both are sons of God it were sin to seek to make the one legitimate at the expense of the other's legitimacy.' Any notion which 'loses the immanence of God from the reason, loses the active presence of God from the collective history and society of man.' (1)

It was this strong conviction that faith cannot be built on a negation of reason which carried him during his polemics against Catholicism into his sharp criticism of Cardinal Newman, whom he accused of 'philosophical scepticism'.

Fairbairn's intellectualism was in accord with the Greek tradition in which he had so firmly grounded himself[2] and of course was akin to medieval scholasticism, to which in many ways he was more closely related than to the Reformation faith (except in his impassioned criticism of Catholicism). More than this, however, was the fact that he set himself solidly against the voluntarism which developed during scholasticism and reached an extreme expression in William of Ockham. A corollary—if not, indeed, the starting point—of Fairbairn's argument against the idea of a Divine Sovereignty not qualified by God's fatherly nature was his repudiation of the Ockhamist substructure in Calvinism. Here was one reason, too, for the mordancy of his criticism of Spencer, for Spencer represented the voluntaristic tendency in British nineteenth century thought,[3] as indicated in his notion of Ultimate Reality in terms of force.

That God is Sovereign Fairbairn himself wished to emphasize: but he further insisted that the Sovereignty is not arbitrary. It is always conditioned by God's nature: God cannot be false, so to say, to his essential being. The Divine nature, moreover, can at least to some degree be known: hence Fairbairn's impatience with Spencer in conceiving the Ultimate as the

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1. Philosophy, p. 19; Catholicism, p. 221.
2. His rich background in Greek thought can be noted in a brilliant and comprehensive essay he wrote on the idea of immortality,—a comparative study of the idea as held in India and in Greece.
3. See Additional Note B, p. 55.

Unknown. God can be known, he argued, because He is immanent in reason. Thus he maintained that to pit reason against faith or against conscience (as he said Newman did) was tantamount to setting faith against truth, which in turn would be tantamount to disproving the claim of religion on man. For Fairbairn always held that man neither should nor does believe because of Divine fiat nor because of any 'external' authority placed upon him. Rather is the authority inherent in faith itself: faith (so to say) grips man and convinces him to believe, man does not seek to grip faith by trying to persuade himself to believe. For this reason Fairbairn vigorously opposed the vesting of authority in tradition,--tradition itself must be criticised by reason. Nor would he admit that a Church could be made the organ of authority: that is to say, he held that the Church is authoritative only as its judgments are true, its judgments are not true because they issue from the Church. In Fairbairn's words:[1]

> 'Belief is not grounded on authority, but authority is realized through belief. Christ's words become authoritative through faith; faith does not come because His words are authoritative. His sovereignty is felt to be legitimate and absolute, because His absolute truth is recognized; and to this recognition, authority, in the Roman sense, not only does not contribute, but is through and through opposed. To believe in Christ because of the church's decrees and determinations, is to believe in the church, not in Christ, and to accept its infallibility instead of His sovereignty.'

Similarly he pointed out (as indicated above) that the Bible is authoritative not because it is the Bible nor because its various parts were incorporated into one book through the canonizing process. No, the Bible is authoritative only because through its pages the living and sovereign God reveals Himself to finite man.

As would be expected from this position, Fairbairn held that theology and philosophy should work together to their mutual advantage.[2] Philosophy in England, he pointed out, had issued in agnosticism because

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1. Catholicism, p. 234.
2. 'Theology is the universe construed through the idea of God; philosophy is the universe construed through the idea of man, but man as mind.' (Place of Christ, p. 62.)

antagonistic to theology; in Germany, on the other hand, philosophy had always tried to give a speculative interpretation to religious ideas, to the great benefit of theology. Hence he believed that religion must be able to justify itself metaphysically, and he construed the traditional theistic proofs as a buttress—in fact as a necessary substructure—to revelation.

In his whole point of view it can readily be seen that coming under the influence of Hegel during his stay in Germany helped to groove the particular channels in which Fairbairn's religious thought moved. This same influence was responsible for another bent given to his mind. Hegel's emphasis on interpreting the world in which we live as 'the work of a larger Reason'[1] which we must endeavour to understand gave Fairbairn that rooting in the historical method which (as we have seen) determined his whole approach thereafter to the study of religion. At the same time he was given the bias toward idealism which characterised his thought, although he cannot rightly be considered as a neo-Hegelian along with the school of British idealists which emanated from T. H. Green,[2] chiefly because he was too sharply aware of the reality of evil in the realm of nature and of man to become an absolutist. Yet he worked, together with the members of this school, to break down the insularity of British thought and to open before it a new vista, the broader and more cosmopolitan outlook of German theology and philosophy.

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1. Webb, Century of Anglican Theology, pp. 29-30. 'Moreover, by seeing in the real world around us—natural, social, intellectual,—the work of a larger Reason than yours or mine, in which your reason and mine are rooted, and a work which we must endeavour therefore to understand before we set about trying to improve it, he (i. e., Hegel) helped to reverse the old rationalistic prejudice in favour of considering as rational only that which could be devised by the individual starting afresh, as it were, for himself, as though his mind had no roots in a larger Reason manifested already in the actual structure of Reality.'
2. Forsyth points out, however, that it is not correct to say that Fairbairn was the indirect source of what was called the New Theology because he introduced Hegelianism into Congregationalism. 'As a matter of fact, Fairbairn had nothing but contempt for the movement as a sort of half-penny journalism in belief; none of his students were associated with it, while some of the best of them were among its (concluded on next page)

Fairbairn's attitude to religion in general may be summarized in his own words about faith.[1]

> 'It is an intellectual act, for it is a form of knowledge; it is an emotional attitude and activity, for it trusts persons and works by love; it is a moral intuition, for it sees obligation in truth and right in duty. It is not a single or occasional act, though it may be compared to a vision which for a moment looks into eternity and never forgets what it has seen; but it is continuous communion with the things the vision saw. . . . In both aspects, as knowledge and as vision, faith is a receptivity; it is man standing open to the touch and action of the eternal, yet as also sensitive and active, holding fast to what has been received.'[2]

Thus Fairbairn had implicit trust in reason, and considered that its work consisted in construing the theistic proofs as a metaphysical justification for religion. This natural religion formed the basis for revealed. He further maintained that all religions contained truth, and that Christianity stood as the consummation to all expressions of religion, it alone being able to vindicate its claim to be the sole universal religion.

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severest critics; and the real source of the excursion was the University —the Oxford Hegelians; and more particularly neither Green nor Wallace, with the labour demanded by the "Logic", but Caird, with his easy style, ideal charm, and attractive generalizations.' ("Dr. Fairbairn as a Theologian", Westminster Gazette, Feb. 12, 1912, p. 2.)

Principal H. Wheeler Robinson in conversation suggested that Fairbairn's whole point of view was strongly antagonistic to the flamboyant emotionalism of the New Theology.

1. Philosophy, p. 548.
2. See Additional Note C, p. 56.

ADDITIONAL NOTES.

NOTE A.

The general impression left by Fairbairn's exegetical work is, as Principal Garvie suggests, that he is 'often more dogmatic than historical. . . when he is marshalling the New Testament evidence'. (Lond. Rev., op. cit., p.33.)

Fairbairn himself differentiated four kinds of criticism: literary, historical, religious and doctrinal. The first two are inseparably connected. 'Without the criticism of literature there could be neither order nor accuracy in our knowledge of history; without historical criticism there would be nothing to keep thought face to face with reality.' Yet the two must never be identified, and Fairbairn criticised Robertson Smith for identifying them. Each must act, Fairbairn held, as a check upon the other. Ideas and persons embodying religion are investigated by what Fairbairn called religious criticism. Doctrine, too, can be criticised, but not dogma, since dogma as stated is essential to the being of the Church. (Studies, pp. 246-252.)

Several of his former students told me in conversation that Fairbairn never quite managed to escape in his Biblical approach from the naive conservatism of the early, evangelical days of his ministry, before he went to Germany. One of these students remarked that when Fairbairn preached--'and powerful preaching it was!'--he spoke of Abraham and Job (for instance) as though they lived in the house next door.

'In his last volume,' writes Principal Garvie in the article quoted above, 'he gives us Studies of Paul and John which seem to me to ignore the legitimate demands of criticism. The "beloved disciple" is identified with John, the son of Zebedee, and both the Gospel and the Apocalypse are ascribed to his authorship. In earlier volumes the same defect of critical discernment is present. One does not blame Dr. Fairbairn for not anticipating later results of scholarship; what one regrets is that he does not take adequate account of the critical scholarship of his own time, even if only to challenge its conclusions. In "bringing out the religious signification of the books" he seems to me to draw conclusions which literary and historical criticism would not sustain.' (pp. 33-4.)

NOTE B.

The tendency toward voluntarism in the nineteenth century can be traced to Kant's giving primacy to the practical reason. (The trend goes back, through Luther, to Ockham.) The tendency became more marked as the century advanced, and had some influence on religious life in Britain, possibly especially in stimulating a pessimistic attitude.

Schopenhauer, who opposed the direction which German idealism had taken after Kant, propounded a pessimistic philosophy based on the will as the only reality, since knowledge, as Schopenhauer declared that Kant had clearly shown, is based on appearances and not on things-in-themselves. What Kant had recognized as radical evil in the human will, Schopenhauer made more explicit by showing that the evil lay in the 'will to live' and that man's only salvation lies in negating--in Buddhist fashion--this craving for life and entering upon

a new way 'which may end in the return of the will into that state of nothingness from which it has only emerged to seek a happiness in living which living can never yield'. (Webb, History of Philosophy, p. 228.) Because of the recognized dominance of pain over pleasure in life, Schopenhauer held that morality consists not in fulfilling duties to one's fellows, but in having sympathy for their suffering.

Schopenhauer's chief disciple, von Hartmann, in his Philosophy of the Unconscious, brought together his master's pessimism with an evolutionary optimism, pointing out that what is rational in the life-process denies the unreason of the will to live. Nietzsche, in basing his philosophy not on self-negation but on vigorous self-assertion, developed the converse of Schopenhauer's fundamental tenet, his central idea having been concerned with the expression of the 'will to power'. Toward the close of the century this general voluntaristic current of thought found further expression in the pragmatism of James and the vitalism of Bergson.

NOTE C.

Eucken points out (Main Currents of Modern Thought, p. 84) that a 'remarkable cult of the abstract concept' sprang up in the nineteenth century along with an intellectualistic over-valuation, and at least at times (especially when he vigorously took up the cudgel for reason) Fairbairn became guilty of such abstractness. Possibly this tendency influenced him when he condemned Newman's 'Illative sense': he may have been antagonized by the Cardinal's stress on the concrete. At any rate he criticised Newman for his lack of ability for abstract speculation. Certainly much of recent thought would consider the 'power of judging about truth and error in concrete matters' (Grammar of Assent, p.346) --as Newman defined the Illative sense--a most comprehensive idea of reason since inclusive of the intuitive as well as discursive reason. (Cp. also another statement from the Grammar: 'Our most natural mode of reasoning is, not from propositions to propositions, but from things to things, from concrete to concrete, from wholes to wholes.' p. 323)

This is not to say that Fairbairn's basic notion of reason was no larger than merely covering the discursive power. For him reason was not merely a ratiocinative faculty. The most vital work of reason (in his view) is to gain insight, to 'get' principles valid to itself: making deductions must always be secondary. He thought of reason as being essentially architectonic, partially constituting even while construing nature and the world in which it lives; the more it is truly itself, the more does it work toward a perfect systhesis of all experience. Knowledge of religious truth would not be possible at all, were reason not constitutive, and did it not have 'religious truth so in it, that it is bound to seek and to conceive religious truth without it.' (Catholicism, p. 209.)

But if at times Fairbairn seemed, through strongly emphasizing its importance, to hypostasize reason, actually he was opposed in a marked degree to a faculty psychology. He criticised Newman for a 'division of nature', arguing that conscience cannot be set in antagonism to reason, as he declared Newman did in making reason critical, sceptical and even atheistic and placing it under the authority of conscience. Fairbairn contended that religion on such a foundation cannot include the whole man: the wider base for religion must be a 'nobler Catholicism' than that of Rome, one 'of man, based, not on

the excommunication of the reason, but on the reconciliation of the whole nature, intellect, conscience, heart, will, to God and His truth'. (Catholicism, p. 131) To set up a dualism in human nature between conscience and reason, Fairbairn insisted, is to make impossible real knowledge of religious truth. He further argued that the man deaf to the voice of conscience may not be able to reason rightly in religious matters; but when the reason is doubted or misused, the voice of conscience is not heard or cannot guide. But reason, like conscience,--because part of the 'whole man',--cannot be 'without religious character, unable to construe religious truths for what they really are,' else 'there can be no legitimate reasoning concerning religion; truth is inaccessible to it, and it is incompetent to the discovery and determination of truth'. (Catholicism, p. 213)

Although he admitted, with Newman, that human reason is active in 'fallen man', Fairbairn mentions it only in an incidental way. His unbounded --almost exuberant--confidence in reason forms a sharp contrast with the emphasis in recent theology on the 'twist' in human reason. At one place, for instance, when urging that Protestantism signifies the 'supremacy of reason', he wrote: 'The reason, indeed, is not particular, individual, arbitrary, but universal, law-abiding, reasonable--the thought which cannot think without following the laws of its own being, and cannot follow them without finding the truth. The whole truth may not be found, but what is found is reality, divine and sovereign to the man who finds it.' (Catholicism, p. 137.)

As a matter of fact, Newman and Fairbairn spoke a different language: they quite misunderstood each other, and their controversy must be viewed in this light. Principal Selbie says in this connection: 'There was a streak of Puritan intolerance in his (Fairbairn's) nature. It comes out in his treatment of Newman and his friends, and sometimes clouds his judgment in spite of his efforts to be scrupulously fair.' (Cong'l Quat., op. cit., p. 403.)

Forsyth's comment (op. cit., p. 2.) about the controversy is illuminating. 'The great minds fall into two classes—extensive and intensive --those with a wide and evolutionary survey, and those with an intense and penetrative divination. In the New Testament they are represented by the author of Hebrews on the one hand and St. Paul on the other. On another level Fairbairn would represent the one, his antagonist Newman the other--the one an easy master of the historic field, the other ill-informed, but with the flair of genius for the tragic and holy heart of things. The one class is more at home in a University, where all things are integrated into a grand historic procession; the other in a Church, where under all things is a moral convulsion, and under that God bearing it. For the one revelation is evolutionary, for the other it is redemptive; for the one the action of an organising idea, for the other the effect of a saving act and a moral teleology. For the one it is philosophic, for the other it is theological. For the one the ruling interest is a spiritual process, ruled by an "architectonic idea"; for the other it is a crisis, with the note not of growth from imperfection but of judgment, and moral salvation from guilt. The one stands on the idea, the other on the conscience.'

An anecdote told me by Professor David Scott is also of interest. He recalled a walk with Fairbairn in Oxford when they happened to pass Bishop Gore. Fairbairn remarked about Gore: 'A good man, but no theologian.'

CHAPTER III. FAIRBAIRN'S THEISM AND THE SCIENCE-RELIGION CONFLICT.

i. Fairbairn's Attitude to the Conflict between Religion and Science.

As science under the spell of Darwinism attained a dominant position in the latter part of the nineteenth century, the general point of view and speculations of scientists ruled the world of thought. Religionists for the most part were on the defensive. The inner meaning of the conflict between religion and science is brought to a sharp focus by M. Maritain in True Humanism.[1]

> 'We can mark a first significant moment in this process [i. e., the dissolution of 'this proud anthropocentric personality' through 'the dispersion of its material elements'] in the world of biology, with the triumph of the Darwinian idea of man's simian origin. Man, in this view, is seen not only as emerging from a long-drawn evolution of animal species (that is a purely historical and, after all, secondary question), but as issuing from this biological evolution without any metaphysical discontinuity, without at a given moment, with the coming of human being, anything absolutely new appearing in the series: spiritual subsistence implying that in each generation of a human being an individual soul is created by the Author of all things and cast into existence with an eternal destiny.'

Fairbairn knew where the core of the conflict between religion and science lay, and aimed to construct a theistic apologetic to resolve it. In opposition to the clearly defined tendency of the epoch, which Eucken described as the 'desire of realism to eliminate the soul'[2] and which Fairbairn himself more probably would have called the determination of naturalism[3] to eliminate the transcendental ideal from human life, he continually held before himself the

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1. pp. 20-1. The next two 'moments' to which Maritain refers were (1) the development of the Freudian psychology and (2) the 'revolutionary moment', the 'reversal of all values'. Both of these moments, of course, emerged into the open after Fairbairn's time.
2. Main Currents of Modern Thought, p. 107.
3. Although he did not consider it entirely apt, Fairbairn used the word 'naturalism' to characterize the tendency to interpret the universe in terms of nature, not of spirit. The more common word used in the nineteenth century to express this idea was 'materialism', naturalism coming to be generally used only in the present century. In this thesis, 'naturalism' will be used throughout.

task of reconstructing a theological system which would conserve the values of traditional Christianity and yet would not fail to come to terms with the developing thought.[1] Against the current secularism, empiricism, agnosticism, and materialism,—all of which we may sum up, in a general way, with the single term 'naturalism',--he brilliantly defended his liberal idealism as a rival interpretation of the universe which, he declared, went further than any other to explain all the facts as well as all the meanings of human life. The contemporary situation which he faced he described as follows:[2]

> 'The conflict of Faith in our day is most arduous and fell. It lives surrounded by real or potential enemies. Science cannot publish her discoveries without letting us hear the shock of their collision with the ancient Faith. The political philosopher seeks to show how the State can live and prosper without religion; the ethical thinker how right can exist and law govern without God. A philosophy that denies the surest and most necessary religious truths works in harmony with a criticism that resolves into mythologies the holiest religious histories. A large section of our literature, including some of the finest creations of living imagination, interpret Nature and man, exhibit life and destiny from the standpoint of those who have consciously renounced belief in God and can find on earth nothing divine but humanity. Our working men listen to theories of life that leave around them only blank material walls, within them no spiritual reality, before them no higher and larger hope. With so many forces inimical to faith at work in our midst, men find it easiest to assume an attitude of absolute antagonism either, on the one hand, to Faith, or, on the other to Knowledge.'

To keep faith and knowledge on friendly terms, so to speak, was one of the chief aims lying behind Fairbairn's apologetic work; for he held that religion and science are not opposed if both are rightly conceived. Certainly Fairbairn persistently maintained that faith can have nothing to fear from any new knowledge, whatever it might be, since it as much as science wishes to know the truth. Religion, therefore, has no quarrel with science, only with what Fairbairn called 'scientific metaphysics', which was trying to eliminate the concept of 'spirit' from its interpretation of the universe. He aimed to refute the attacks of scientific speculation on religion with the theistic proofs.

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1. A word invented by Thomas Huxley to 'denote his own position'. Cp. Webb, Religious Thought in England from 1850, p. 83 and note.
2. City of God, pp. 7-8.

ii. Nature, Man and God.

Since Fairbairn understood that science can be legitimately concerned only with processes and that whenever it begins to speak of origins it is transgressing beyond its proper sphere of investigation, he attacked with vigour systems of thought or speculative tendencies which had their beginnings in science and were antagonistic to theism. He was convinced that no amount of scientific research could affect the foundations of theism in any way, either to validate or invalidate, but that the scientific speculation which eventuated in naturalism was quite outside its legitimate sphere in attacking theism, and in contradicting theism was radically unsound in its metaphysical speculating.

Fairbairn sought to prove that without a theistic approach to nature, it is not possible to formulate any intelligible concept of nature at all; and in his view the only sound basis for theism is the idea of a supernatural which transcends and is prior to the natural. But whenever the supernatural is postulated, naturalism, which makes the reason for nature lie within itself without any reference to an 'outside' power, considers nature's 'realm of law' broken into and interfered with. To this contention that nature is a closed system Fairbairn replied in terms of the Berkeleian epistemology, since he considered knowing and being in essence an unity.

> 'In the strictest sense matter has no independent being, but spirit has, for independence is made by two things—the ability to know and the capacity of being known. . . What does not know does not really exist. . . God and man both are, since both are capable of knowing and of being known, i. e., each is real both to himself and to the other.' (1)

Man, then, being mind which alone is real, is the interpretation as well as the interpreter of nature. Naturalism can explain neither man nor nature, the 'man' of the naturalistic speculations being a mere abstraction, and nature in naturalistic terms being wholly unintelligible and hence non-interpretable. The only key Fairbairn allowed to be of any use in solving the enigma of both man and nature is mind, the divine element in man which mirrors transcendent

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1. Philosophy, p. 57.

Mind.

Although he referred to the world as the 'organism' of God, 'comparing it to the body as expressing the mind of man',[1] Fairbairn also used the analogy of interpreting a language to elucidate his position. If the signs making up a language unknown to us did not represent thought, if they were not symbols of reason, the language must remain wholly unintelligible to us. Thus he wrote:

> '. . . it was the reason immanent in the language that made it rational to us, that unless thought had made it, thought could never have understood, interpreted, and translated it. So the universe is rational to our reason by virtue of the immanent and absolute Reason it articulates; and these two, the outer and the inner Reason, co-existing, alike active, alike related, the universal acting on the particular reason through nature, through nature the particular reaching, reading and hearing the universal, cannot but create, as it were, by act and articulation, recognition of the fact, a confession and monument of the relation. And this recognition is faith in God, man's discovery of the Reason without and above him through the action of that Reason within and upon him, and, as a consequence, his consciousness of his dependence upon God and his obligations to Him.' (2)

Intelligibility in nature cannot be conceived, then, unless both creative and receptive intelligence are lying behind and in it. But thought alone can construct the intelligible, Fairbairn argued; and since thought or mind is the most distinctive characteristic of personality, personality cannot be eliminated from nature in the naturalistic manner without making it entirely unintelligible. It follows that personality is the condition of nature's being, as well as the factor through which alone nature can be interpreted. The personality which interprets, which co-ordinates, the multifarious phenomena of nature cannot be considered as one of the 'co-ordinated atoms'. The conclusion which Fairbairn reaches is that 'the Personality which makes Nature was not made by the Nature it makes'.[3]

But this conclusion needed further explication, and Fairbairn

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1. Quick, The Christian Sacraments, p. 17. Canon Quick further suggests that not a few thinkers have 'regarded the world rather as an "artificial" symbol of the divine, using, perhaps unconsciously, the analogy of language which signifies a reality infinitely remote from what in itself it is. .' (Ibid.) Fairbairn, although using the analogy of language (concluded on next page)

maintained that man not only construes nature, but also in part constitutes it, giving to nature, for example, such secondary qualities as colour and sound. Likewise with the concept of energy, set up as an ultimate cause by the speculative scientists: Fairbairn explained that this notion of causation used in interpreting nature can be derived only through a deduction from will, that is to say, from the human experience of conscious freedom.[1] Thus Fairbairn held with other philosophic idealists that the idea of causation is the necessary correlate of freedom in man; and this idea also partially constitutes nature, from what is given <u>within</u> man, in terms of personality. Man supplies to the interpretation of nature, then, secondary qualities and such concepts as energy or cause, as well as the categories through which the phenomena of nature become intelligible. Fairbairn summarized his position in a series of inferences.[2]

> '(1) Since the intellect can interpret Nature, Nature is intelligible; (2) since Nature is intelligible, there must be some correspondence or correlation between its laws or methods and the rational processes in us; (3) since there is this correlation between the intelligible world and the interpretative intellect, they must embody one and the same intelligence.'

At a time when many theologians considered that the theory of

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seemed to hover between these two positions, partly no doubt because he wished to hold fast to the traditional Christian view of affirming both the transcendence and immanence of God.

2. <u>City of God</u>, p. 68. "Faith and Modern Thought", a lecture delivered in 1878 at Airedale College. The general line of thought is the same as that developed in the <u>Philosophy</u> in 1902.
3. <u>Philosophy</u>, p. 30.

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1. Fairbairn followed essentially the same line of reasoning in this respect as his contemporary, James Martineau, whom Principal Dickie has called the 'greatest of English Theological Rationalists'. (<u>Fifty Years of British Theology</u>, p. 30.)
2. <u>Philosophy</u>, p. 35. Cp. Streeter, <u>Reality</u>, p. 21. 'The Idealists. . . maintain that the relation of cause and effect, though contributed by our minds in the act of knowing, is a relation which must also hold good of Reality Itself. Largely on this ground, they argue that Reality must be conceived as <u>rational</u>--in the sense that Its structure must be thought of as similar to what we know as Reason. The Universe, then, must be viewed as the expression of Mind; and our minds partake of the nature of the Universal Mind, and see things—of course, "through a glass darkly"--as It or He sees them.'

evolution as propounded by Darwin jeopardized theism, Fairbairn accepted it as a highly significant, comprehensive hypothesis which would be of value in gaining a better understanding of the universe. But he turned the flank of the evolutionists' attack on religion which was based on the idea, set forth by such men as Spencer, Tyndall, and Huxley in England or Haeckel in Germany, that the hypothesis of evolution could give a causal account of creation. Fairbairn stressed time and again that the Darwinian hypothesis might give a modal account of creation, but it could never give to thought either the 'why' or the 'what' of the beginnings of nature and man. To attempt to make matter the primary cause, 'the promise and potency of all terrestrial life' (in Tyndall's phrase), is but a theory of nescience and had in Fairbairn's judgment no significance in explaining the origin of life--and certainly not of mind. The only interpretation of the universe which is constructive must be built on a transcendent or theistic basis. Fairbairn's contention was that science no more than philosophy or religion can interpret the universe without postulating a beginning, 'and a beginning that contains the end'.[1]

What Fairbairn called Darwin's petitio principii is that he 'smuggled in' not only forms of life which could evolve but also an environment in which they could evolve. Likewise Fairbairn showed that the speculative evolutionists took for granted that a natural process like evolution could account for the emergence of mind without in any way recognizing that mind could not 'emerge' from nature unless Mind lay behind nature. Evolution has terminated in man, to be sure: but the method of development in no way explains the end result, which is mind. That from which life and mind evolved must be invested with the qualities which enabled it to produce man, who is living spirit. Fairbairn held that there could be only one sound explanation of the evolution of man: that a world in which reason develops by means of a natural

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1. City of God, p. 62.

process must be rooted in reason: and recognition of the 'outer' reason (i. e., as initiating the process) and the 'inner' reason in man at once implies relation between self and not-self, which means no less than faith in God and leads to the consciousness of man's dependence on and obligation to Him.

One of Fairbairn's general criticisms of naturalism was that it was quite unhistorical in its approach. So he pointed out that the natural histories of creation rested on unsound suppositions. One such presupposition was that belief in God originated in the idea of creation. Actually such belief, he maintained, in all the ancient mythologies (e. g., in the Judaic) can be shown to have been much older than the idea of creation. Another charge brought against theism was that creation by God must be construed, in Paley's phrase, as the work of a 'manlike Artificer' who constructed and designed the universe in detail,[1] a notion manifestly absurd if the Darwinian hypothesis was valid. Fairbairn's answer to this charge was that the deepest theistic thought has never had this notion, an idea really scientific or philosophic in origin, having arisen in the early speculations about nature in Greece. In the Hebraic conception of creation God is represented as speaking,--and speech, Fairbairn always argued, is the symbol of thought and volition, implying that both mind and will were expressed in creation.[2]

To speak in terms of a manlike Artificer, moreover, is to suggest that the world was created and then left to fend for itself. Fairbairn pointed out that this was but the old Deism again. Over against such a Deist conception, --and Fairbairn held that it was against such an antiquated notion that the

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1. 'Theism is represented as an anthropomorphic theory of creation, a "process of manufacture" by "a manlike Artificer".' (Studies in Religion and History, p. 75.) Fairbairn in this connection quotes Spencer's First Principles (p. 33): 'Alike in the rudest creeds and the cosmogony long current among ourselves, it is assumed that the genesis of the heavens and the earth is effected somewhat after the manner in which a workman shapes a piece of furniture.'
2. In his emphasis on the doctrine of creation, Fairbairn reacted against the Hegelian idea of God; for a God who is Creator, since of necessity related to the world, cannot be conceived as an abstract Absolute.

scientific evolutionists were contending when they inveighed against theism,--he insisted that nature cannot be construed as being independent of God, but all the time dependent on His activity for its immanent energies. 'The growth, the multiplication, and the differentiation of organisms are but the forms under which the original creative energy continues to operate.'[1] In short, Fairbairn conceived nature in Darwinian terms, as an organism which had evolved and in which the power of development is the immanence of God: hence God's action in nature can never be considered as 'interference' or even 'special'.

But if Fairbairn moved with other religious thinkers of his day in stressing the immanence of God in order to save the Christian faith,--a movement which in part at least was a reaction against the over-emphasis on the Divine transcendence during the preceding century as in part it was coming to terms with the prevailing monism,--he did not carry his immanentism so far as to become involved in pantheism or, with the neo-Hegelian idealists, to deny personality in God. It was, in fact, his holding fast to the idea of personality in the Divine Nature as well as his refusal to equate the eternal, infinite God with nature and man, both of which are finite and temporal, that enabled him to retain in his thinking the dual conception of orthodox Christianity: that God is no less transcendent even though immanent in nature and man, in nature as energy, in man as reason and will. 'Immanence denotes the mode in which the Divine activities are exercised,' he argued, 'not the mode of the Divine existence',[2] which can be embodied or incarnate in nature but can never be identified with nature.

The doctrine of Divine immanence affected many religious beliefs which had been considered self-evident. As the belief in mechanical causation and the uniformity of law in nature and in all life became regnant, it was inevitable that God, as we have seen, should be pushed to the beginning of

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1. Philosophy, p. 54.
2. City of God, p. 56.

things and that nature should be considered self-sustaining without His continued activity in it. This new world-view had been developing since Galileo enunciated his first law of motion in 1638, although 'Newton still thought divine interference occasionally necessary to correct observed irregularities' in nature; but 'later it was shown that such irregularities corrected themselves and that Newton's assumption was therefore gratuitous'.[1] Religionists in the nineteenth century built an apologetic to controvert the notion of a self-sustaining universe, as in the instance of Fairbairn, by stressing the immanence of God, even as they were emphatic in propounding the doctrine of creation to oppose the further sophistication of the monistic idea, namely, that a self-sustaining universe could also be self-originating. As the new world-view and new apologetic developed side by side, the interpretation of miracles could not but undergo considerable change.

Fairbairn himself was too much of an immanentist to give either a naive or very positive apologetic for miracles. But even as he clung to the idea of God's transcendence, so he considered the concept of miracle important if not essential for faith. He did not, that is to say, allow the distinction between natural and supernatural to be entirely eliminated, as happened with thorough-going immanentism. Of course he vituperated those scientific metaphysicians who argued against miracle as if religious apologetic late in the nineteenth century still interpreted miracle in the artificial way of Archbishop Tillotson and Paley in the late eighteenth century, when the whole truth of the Christian religion had been made to rest on prophecy and miracle. Against such widely different thinkers as Hume,[2] Matthew Arnold, and Huxley, all of whom dogmatically denied miracle—at least its credibility if not its possibility--

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1. McGiffert, The Rise of Modern Religious Ideas, p. 37. McGiffert quotes Galileo's law as follows: 'Every body continues in its state of motion or of rest, unless acted upon by some opposing force.'
2. Fairbairn pointed out that Hume's argument against miracles was inconsistent with his philosophic principles and hence could not be sustained even on the basis of the Scottish philosopher's own reasoning.

Fairbairn argued more or less along the same line, tersely indicated when he wrote: 'The late Matthew Arnold used to say in his very oracular, which was also a very foolish, manner, "The unfortunate thing about miracles is, they do not happen," to which I simply reply, "The remarkable thing is that they have happened".'[1] Specifically Fairbairn pointed to the original creation out of which evolved the present universe and especially to the emergence of mind as definite evidences of miracle. Even if one does not believe in God, Fairbairn maintained that the supernatural must be postulated if the universe is not to remain an insoluble enigma. But in essence he made the belief in miracle a question of principle, intimately linked with the Being of God, as can be seen to some extent in the following passage:[2]

> 'If God is not, miracles will of necessity be in the strict sense of the word impossible. . . If you exclude from your view of the universe a personal God, miracles or the supernatural will vanish with Him. . . If there is a God, then nature as it appears to the senses is not the whole of being; it incorporates a perfect reason, it assumes there is an almighty will by whose action and through whose action and through whose consent and concurrence it was and is. . . If there be a moral Deity and I am a moral man, we must be able to get at each other. And the only way by which we can get at each other is through the supernatural; and what is the supernatural when it becomes actual save the miraculous? The reality of the supernatural involves the possibility of miracles.'

As science was whittling down the area in which miracle could take place and as the tendency to minimize the activity of God in the world grew more prominent, it came to be recognized that even if many events termed miracle by naive peoples could be explained naturally, yet one must allow for the direct intervention of the supernatural in a miraculous way in the founding of Christianity. Fairbairn shared this view. 'Can you take the miraculous narratives out of the gospel and leave anything behind?'[3] he asked: and the answer seemed to him so obvious as to make the question rhetorical. Man is a

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1. "The Miracles of Christ", p. 190, in the symposium, What is Christianity?
2. Ibid, p. 189-90, 195. Note also the following statement: 'But the problems they (i. e., miracles) raise are religious and ethical as well as philosophical and historical, and, we may add, the former are profounder and more determinative than the latter.' (Philosophy, p. 331.)
3. Ibid, p. 206.

child of nature and hence bound by its ineluctable laws, Fairbairn agreed; but our Lord who transcended nature by His very being suspended these natural laws. However carefully the background of our Lord is studied--race, place or time of birth, family, education--it is not possible to account for His life and influence as that of an ordinary man, as a 'natural being'. No, Fairbairn argued, our Lord Himself was the miracle. And the proper action of such a person is the 'extraordinary act'. In this general contention Fairbairn followed the trend which made Christ and Christianity 'support the miracles instead of being sustained by them'.[1] Fairbairn's approach to the whole concept of miracle, like that of his contemporaries, was really that the miracles are a difficulty to be explained rather than a buttress to sustain faith.

In the nineteenth century world-view another difficulty which had to be met was in regard to prayer. Professor Taylor writes in this connection:[2]

> 'We know, too, how widely even anti-materialistic philosophers in the second half of the nineteenth century were infected by the coarse deterministic prejudice that prayer if it means anything more than meditation is an absurdity, because to pray implies the belief that the "laws of the physical world" can be modified or suspended by the will of God.'

Fairbairn did not succumb to this prejudice, however much he believed in the rigid 'laws of nature' and however much he was against the notion of 'interference' by the supernatural in the realm of the natural. If man himself through volition and the putting forth of energy (ran his argument) can effect changes in the world without as well as within himself, why should not God, the Spirit immanent in the universe, be able to act in and through nature, answering prayer through the 'normal action of the universe tempered, perhaps, in special cases to our weakness, or our weakness tempered to it'?[3] Nor is there any

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1. McGiffert, op. cit., p. 39.
2. The Faith of a Moralist, Vol. II, pp. 82-3.
3. Sermons, "Providence and Prayer", p. 220. This 'pulpit discussion', as he called it, is the only published writing in which Fairbairn dealt specifically with the subject of prayer. Although it was written in 1873, it was not published until 1893; hence it can probably be considered as representative of his mature thought.

reason for not including the 'physical' as well as the 'spiritual' in the legitimate sphere of prayer, for the Divine Will can so administer His laws 'as to meet special ends. So understood, prayer in the physical sphere becomes both normal and right'.[1]

It is interesting to note that Fairbairn referred to the suggestion made to Tyndall and promulgated by him that an experiment to test the efficacy of prayer should be arranged by setting aside two wards in a hospital, the patients in the one to be made the objects of prayer, those in the other not to be prayed for at all. If the former patients showed more marked or more rapid improvement, the efficacy of prayer, according to this 'experiment', would be vindicated. Fairbairn pointed out that such a 'scientific' experiment was quite out of place, not only because religious matters cannot be tested in this way, but especially because it would be impossible to isolate patients in a hospital who would not be prayed for by someone; that only a non-religious man could even suggest that certain suffering people should not be prayed for. To be sure, Fairbairn admitted, the ultimate test of prayer is experimental; 'but the region of the experiment is the living soul, which, so long as it lives and believes that over and above it broods the living God, will cry out to Him in all its trouble'.[2]

Fairbairn's thought in regard to nature and Supernature may be summarized as follows. The supernatural or transcendental denoted for him 'a cause which is as native to Nature as reason or thought is to man'.[3] Only by postulating the priority of the supernatural can the natural be explained, can any account be given of the origin of the world or of man, since clearly the notion of a self-originating universe is but a theory of nescience. Religion with its doctrine of creation seeks to explain the 'why' of nature

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1. Sermons, p. 221.
2. Ibid, p. 223.
3. Philosophy, p. 56.

even as science with its theory of evolution tries to describe the 'how'. But if creation by God, if the activity of the supernatural, be denied, then no account of beginnings can be given. Creation is no finished product, however, but a continuing process; and since the universe can no more be considered self-sustaining than self-originating, Fairbairn held that the Will of God as its immanent energy 'moves' the universe. But the Will of God, since super-natural, is also transcendent, even as the mind of man is transcendent over nature.

iii. God and the Moral Consciousness.

As Fairbairn could brook no antipathy between reason and faith, so he considered morality an integral part of religion. Already in the origin of religion he traced the moral factor to the personal obligation laid upon man by his not-Self, and he steadily maintained that morality and faith can never be severed.[1] Religion and morality are so indissolubly bound together by God into a 'great whole' that the 'man who puts them asunder commits an act unholy'.[2] He summed up the matter in a sermon with these words:[3]

> 'The religious man must be moral, the man who is really moral in being and action must be religious. Religion is the manifestation of morality; morality the incarnation, the manifestation in the flesh of religion.'

In developing his moral theory--and here as elsewhere in his work he is rather critical than constructive--Fairbairn expounded the theistic proof from the moral consciousness even while criticising the empirist and evolutionary ethic. Throughout the history of moral progress, he maintained, in which the significant factor has always been where the new differed from the old, man has applied to himself a standard of judgment, been drawn by a moral ideal, felt a moral obligation,--a law he knew he should obey even while he

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1. A. A. Bowman's sentence (Studies in the Philosophy of Religion, Vol. II, p. 37) aptly expresses Fairbairn's position: 'When religion and morality fail to synthesize, morality may hold its own against religion, but religion will have the utmost difficulty in maintaining itself against morality.'
2. Sermons, p. 49.
3. Ibid, p. 186.

disobeyed it. Neither the empirist nor evolutionary ethic, in claiming that this moral obligation could arise out of nature per se or out of society or be the product of human experience, can adequately explain its origin: the only explanation, Fairbairn held, is that the sense of obligation is transcendent in origin.

Even as Fairbairn considered the epistemology of empiricism inadequate as a metaphysic of knowledge, so he argued that its ethic is inadequate as a metaphysic of morality. For Fairbairn contended that inasmuch as man needed a priori categories of the understanding to make knowledge of the external world possible, so he needed transcendental moral elements to make the genesis of his moral ideal understandable, If, however, knowledge is conceived as the product of sense impressions, then the moral standard too will be considered as the product of experience. The ethical systems of Hobbes, Hume and Bentham, Fairbairn criticised together. For all three based their ethic on the satisfaction of man's appetite for pleasure, although Hume sought to make his ethic not wholly one of self-interest by making conscience the judgment of society 'expressed in a self-judgment'. Whereas all three made the underlying principle of their systems the natural man and the satisfaction of his basic appetition, Fairbairn pointed out that in trying to construct ethical systems they were to that extent seeking to moralize nature.

> 'The very attempt, therefore, to interpret man ethically implied that he was more than a natural being, that he transcended nature, that his transcendence ought to be progressive in its quality, and that a completely moral state was one where laws proper to man governed men: creatures merely natural could not be governed by such laws.' (1)

Moreover, even while apparently trying to establish a social sanction for their ethic, Fairbairn argued that these empirical thinkers had to remain strictly individualistic, the only standard of moral judgment possible for them having been based solely on the experience of the individual.

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1. Philosophy, p. 68.

Fairbairn considered that the evolutionary ethic was no less inadequate to explain the genesis of the moral ideal which constrains man than was the utilitarian ethic of the early empiricists. This evolutionary ethic developed out of the theories of Darwin and Spencer. According to Darwin's theory, the moral faculty developed, by the process of natural selection, out of the social instinct which desired the approbation of the tribe; he thought of differences, however, as based on variations which are chance or accidental occurrences--the springing up of 'sports'--and so the growth of moral ideas was conceived as a series of 'incidents that happened in the course of things rather than products of any reason, personal or collective.'[1]

Spencer in building his synthetic system could not leave anything to happenstance, and Fairbairn explained that even as this thinker who sought to build an evolutionary philosophy made life consist in the adaptation of organism to environment, so he made moral progress consist in the self-moved movement, as it were, toward 'ideal congruity'. This ideal congruity, as Fairbairn noted in Spencer's words, is the life of 'the completely adapted man in the completely evolved society'.[2] The moral sense develops, on the basis of Spencer's theory of the inheritance of acquired characteristics, in the struggle of man toward this goal: the motivation in this process, Fairbairn pointed out, is the same as with the utilitarians, namely the amount of pleasure derived by the individual from his action.

The evolutionary ethic must be criticised in the first place, according to Fairbairn, from the point of view of science, which made the transmission of acquired characteristics a doubtful theory. Even if acquired characteristics could be inherited, he stressed that the significant fact to note is that what would be of most value to the individual, the experience of the parent, cannot be inherited. Furthermore whatever affinities there may be

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1. Philosophy, p. 70.
2. Quoted in Ibid, p. 71.

between the ethical ideas of man and the instincts of his ancestors--whether primitive man or the animal--again the significant factor is the difference between them, which is qualitative. The core of Fairbairn's criticism of the evolutionary ethic, however, lay in the fact that the moral obligation placed on man has not consisted in adjustment to environment, but in adjusting his environment to the 'higher ideal' which he brings to it.[1] 'We judge both the environment and the organism, because we apply to both an ideal standard which expresses our notion of what ought to be.'[2]

In a more general way Fairbairn criticised the ethic based on experience, whether utilitarian or evolutionary, on the basis of man's conception of human freedom. Fairbairn, following Kant, would make man's moral autonomy a presupposition of the obligation laid on him, i. e., that the 'ought' implies the 'can': only what lies within man's power to achieve can be considered a part of his duty. But both the utilitarian and evolutionary ethic denied moral freedom to man[3] by making him completely subject to the desire for pleasure and the avoidance of pain, the fundamental motive, especially in the evolutionary ethic, being self-preservation in the struggle for existence. But if the obligation laid on man is real, Fairbairn argued, man must have freedom of choice, since otherwise he could make no moral judgments. Furthermore, the Edwardian distinction drawn between freedom of will and freedom of action is

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1. Huxley in a modified way developed this same thought in his Romanes lecture delivered a decade earlier (in 1893). 'The practice of that which is ethically best--what we call goodness or virtue--involves a course of conduct which, in all respects, is opposed to that which leads to success in the cosmic struggle for existence. . . The ethical progress of society depends, not on imitating the cosmic process, still less in running away from it, but in combating it.' Evolution and Ethics, pp. 33f.
2. Philosophy, p. 74.
3. Cp. Webb in Religious Thought in England from 1850, p. 65. 'The gradual but rapid extension of the "reign of law", as it was called, over one region of human experience after another appeared to promise or to threaten (according to the prejudices of the observer) its further extension to the sphere of human volition, so that no room would eventually be left either for the individual freedom which seemed to be required to give meaning to responsibility for one's actions before a divine Judge, or for the operation of the grace which men had been taught to expect from a divine Saviour.'

artificial and unsound, since the latter without the former would be but a form of necessity inasmuch as any response made by man would be wholly pre-determined. That the will is not free because motives determine choices, as had been argued, Fairbairn held to be invalid, since the will selects the motives which determine action. Granted that nature is the realm of necessity, its dominant characteristic being uniformity based on the causative sequence: but personality, Fairbairn concluded, with its power of initiative and of breaking into the sequences nature follows, is the seat of freedom, reasoned will here being dominant. Since man can initiate action he must be more than a mere link in the causal series. That 'the free will acts in view of reasons, and would not be rational if it could choose without them'[1] indicates how little of the arbitrary is involved when man makes choices. Fairbairn argued further that if the human world were a mechanical order of necessitated beings, man could in no way conceive the notion of 'energy', which was considered the power motivating nature by nineteenth century science: but if freedom in man were not the correlate of energy in nature, man would be quite unconscious of any power that could be exercised within himself or resisted from without. In considering the emphasis Spencer placed on the inheritance of acquired characteristics and its relation to moral freedom, Fairbairn pointed out that man bears witness to his freedom of will in the sense of responsibility he has for his actions; that even inheritance, while indubitably conditioning freedom, in no way cancels it, since man feels responsible even for the acts which seem to arise directly out of tendencies he has inherited.

Toward the hedonistic principle of the Millite ethic Fairbairn was caustic.

> 'For Happiness, unqualified, is the most absolutely insignificant term in the whole vocabulary of philosophy or of literature; and it is therefore signally unsuitable when made to play the part of ultimate arbiter as regards the qualities which make actions right or wrong.' (2)

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1. Philosophy, p. 77.
2. Ibid, p. 79. It is doubtful that Fairbairn did justice to the ethical seriousness of J. S. Mill.

But if happiness is to be qualified, Fairbairn maintained that some standard external to and higher than itself must be introduced; and then at once happiness per se ceases to be the principle whereby the character of the particular action is judged. Moreover if a person tried to apply the principle of the happiness of the greatest number, according to Fairbairn's reasoning, he would become hopelessly entangled in a web of conflicting loyalties.[1]

But the strongest criticism which Fairbairn levelled against the entire naturalistic approach to ethics was that it failed to account in any way for the 'imperious' nature of the moral obligation laid on man. Even granting that the happiness of the greatest number is the standard of right, he argued, why should man seek to promote it? Wherein lies the moral constraint which man feels? Suppose one holds with the evolutionists that the constraint rises from a social sanction which has become so a part of the individual's being that he feels it as a personal judgment. But conscience makes its most imperious demand on the individual when it commands him to go against the dictates of society: then how can it be validly held, Fairbairn asked, that society can place an absolute moral obligation upon man? The naturalistic ethic, in short, can give no explanation for the absolute authority of conscience, since society cannot place on man an unconditioned 'ought'.

Whence, then, does conscience receive its unconditioned authority? In developing his answer Fairbairn closely followed Butler and Kant, although, characteristically for nineteenth century moral idealism, at no point did he mention Kant's doctrine of the 'radical evil' in man. According to Fairbairn the authority is within the nature of man, in an absolute moral law which directs man without mediation and which gives to him his essential humanity.

'Subjectively, the ultimate, the thing of which we are supremely

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1. Fairbairn did not take into account, however, that the problem of conflicting loyalties is the bête noire of all ethics.

> conscious if we are conscious of ourselves at all, is the sovereignty of conscience; but objectively, the reality which is the correlate of our ultimate consciousness, is a universe in which God is Sovereign.'(1)

For even as mind in man implies an intelligible medium in which it lives, so the 'ethical man' implies an 'ethical universe'. Man as moral stands above nature, Fairbairn concluded; and moral will, with its power to initiate action and create moral good, is more than the resultant of natural forces. The moral obligation is an unconditional authority because it is transcendent and ideal. It cannot be produced by nature. It can be laid on man only by the supreme ethical Will of God.

But grant that the moral consciousness of man has its roots in the ethical sovereignty of Deity and that man as moral is transcendent over nature: what of the problem of evil which appears as an immense 'surd' to the conception of the ethical man in an ethical universe? Fairbairn avowedly suggested answers (to lead toward a solution of this problem) which stemmed in his natural theological approach, although he was not entirely successful in holding out of his discussions the Christian presuppositions. Evil becomes a problem, in his view, only for him who believes in a God who is at once good and omnipotent,[2] since if either of these attributes is denied to Deity, the existence of evil, while still a difficulty to be met in fashioning a world-view, is not an acute problem for anyone seeking to understand the ways of the universe.

Evil is of two kinds, and here Fairbairn followed the usual classification: physical and moral. The former includes all suffering arising from man's relation to nature, from his own human nature, and from the actions upon him of other human beings, both ancestors and contemporaries. Moral evil

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1. Philosophy, p. 89.
2. Unlike his contemporary, Dean Rashdall, with whose thought in other respects his own thinking is closely akin, Fairbairn did not limit the power of God.

is sin, because it is rebellion of the human will against the sovereignty of its Maker.

Since Fairbairn believed that nature is 'holy and just',[1] --although he did quote in this connection J. S. Mill's terrible indictment of the savagery of nature, he conceived all suffering as being educative or disciplinary when considered by itself; but when it is considered in relation to sin, the punitive and even retributive factor must be taken into account. Suffering which does not seem to be a direct resultant of sin, then, Fairbairn traced to a nature which in the long view is beneficent or to man's ignorance of nature's 'laws'. The catastrophes for which nature seems to be solely responsible are few, since he maintained that ordinarily man in some way or another is a contributory agent. Moreover, the suffering man endures at the hand of nature--whether catastrophes, his own mortality, or evils springing from his own constitution --has disciplined and educated him, taught him the laws by which nature acts, made him compassionate and beneficent as he has seen and tried to alleviate the suffering of his fellows. Nature, in short, is conceived by Fairbairn as 'good in herself, evil only when she falls into evil hands, and is made a minister by sin',[2] since the action and interaction of nature upon and in man has contributed so immeasurably to his progress, both moral and intellectual. It is of especial note that Fairbairn took so little into account what is usually thought of as innocent suffering.

The problem raised by moral evil is more acute, and Fairbairn for the most part met it in the way characteristic of nineteenth century, Protestant thought moving in the liberal, activist channel. Since God is moral, he argued, He would only create beings 'capable of the highest form of good',[3] that is to say, beings who could realize character. Character itself could not be created, since it is not possible for God, conditioned by His own nature, to create what

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1. Philosophy, p. 149. 2. Ibid, p. 156. 3. Ibid.

is in essence uncreatable. It could be achieved only by man himself as a being granted at least a limited freedom. But when man was given freedom, the way at once was open for him to sin. Man, in fact, could not become moral unless it were possible for him to sin,—and Fairbairn laboured this point.

> 'Could there be obedience where disobedience was impossible? or could there be righteousness if wickedness could not be done. . . Hence if a universe is to be created where moral good shall be, it must also be a universe where moral evil may exist.' (1)

He examined and repudiated Augustine's thought as an example of the orthodox view,--that through the occasion of sin something is gained, God is brought nearer to man and man is lifted to greater significance; and this gain could not have been achieved without the sin. As against this view he defended the conception more typical of his generation, that good could be achieved only from the possibility of sin. 'Moral character can be formed only through conflict (with temptation), and the higher the character the fiercer must the conflict be.'[2]

Such a view as that of J. S. Mill, who contended that God's power must be limited or He would never have allowed evil to despoil His creation, Fairbairn set aside by maintaining that God could have kept evil out of the universe, but He chose not to. God did not create evil, nor did He even 'consent' to its entrance into the created world; yet He did not prevent its entrance, since to have done so would have negatived His creation of man. For had man been created a necessitated being,--and only so could God have both created man and held evil out of the world,--Fairbairn argued that man could be neither good nor evil, but only a neutral automaton. God, then, by limiting Himself granted to man a relative freedom, even though knowing, since omniscient, that man would sin. Fairbairn developed the interesting point that had God, with his foreknowledge that evil almost surely would enter His created world,

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1. Philosophy, p. 160. Cp. Martineau's oft-quoted statement: 'A universe which no sin could invade, neither could any character inhabit.' The Seat of Authority in Religion.
2. Sermons, pp. 201-2.

not created man for this reason, then the 'possible evil' and not the omnipotent God would have been 'victor'. Even as He chose not to prevent the entrance of evil into the created world,—and Fairbairn held the idea that evil 'entered' the world through man after his creation rather than that there was a pre-mundane fall,—so He allows evil to continue in the universe not because He condones it, but because He could eradicate it only by destroying free will in man: and <u>that</u> (as we have seen) would mean on the one hand eliminating all that is essentially human in man, and on the other make impossible the achievement of character for which alone man was created.

Physical evil (suffering) when considered by itself must be regarded as wholly disciplinary, even though man himself is responsible for bringing on himself much of this suffering. But when viewed in relation to moral evil, Fairbairn emphasized the juridical factor, namely, that suffering at least in part is punishment for transgressing the universal law of an ethical universe, although even as punishment the educative element must still be thought of as primary, the punitive as secondary. But he is no less emphatic that suffering must follow sin in an ethical universe. 'Were there no suffering in a world where evil is, it would mean that its Sovereign cared as little for the evil as for the good, was indifferent to both.'[1] It is possible, to be sure, that suffering as well as sin may be a sign that man is fallen. But the very fact that suffering is disciplinary in its action shows that it is redemptive and works toward the recovery of man from his fallen state. Hence evil is a factor for good, although Fairbairn urged that even while allowing this, the evil-ness of evil can in no way be toned down. In his historical survey on the problem of evil he showed that he turned definitely away from the absolutist position, (and this despite his immanentism), which would make of evil merely something primitive, or negative, or unharmonious, —in short, all views which tended to lessen the unrelieved badness of evil.

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1. "The Cross and Passion" in the symposium, <u>Life and Work of Redeemer</u>, p. 296.

But as a factor for good, Fairbairn conceived evil as a potent agent making for man's highest beatitude,

> 'a divine energy for moralizing man and nature. . . . It continues to exist not as a rightful or permanent inhabitant of the universe, but as one whose very right to be is denied, and for whose expulsion all the energies of nature have been marshalled and trained to fight.' (1)

One other point finds a place in Fairbairn's argument, that evil is a greater problem for man conceived as mortal being than as immortal soul, since evil in the long view of eternity must appear much differently from what it does in the short view of the earth years. To God who sees the 'whole as whole', who knows the end as the beginning,--and here Fairbairn inclines either toward the absolutist view or toward the notion of divine over-ruling (it is difficult to say which),--evil may appear less 'darkly real' than it does to man.

The problem of evil, then, as problem, did not appear as grim to Fairbairn as it is sometimes painted. Suffering he conceived as disciplinary in action, whether it be resultant on man's ignorance of nature's 'laws' or on guilt due to man's sin. The innocent suffer with the guilty because they are part of the race and because innocent suffering has such a marked redemptive influence on the sinner, although it is difficult to see how Fairbairn's apologetic for innocent suffering is in any way adequate. Although man is immediately responsible for evil, God must ultimately be considered responsible, at least to the degree that he did not 'prevent' the entrance of evil into the created world. But he chose not to prevent the entrance of evil, since only by giving man freedom (and thus making him potentially an evil-doer) could he create persons; and

> 'the only creation worthy of a personal God is a universe of persons; and persons born as potentialities who can be educated by experience, awakened to reason, won to love, and persuaded to obedience.' (2)

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1. Philosophy, p. 167.
2. Ibid, p. 158.

Hence evil, though in itself unmitigated badness, can be made a factor for good as it is fought by man, since moral character can be formed only through such conflict, 'and the higher the character the fiercer must the conflict be.'[1]

Fairbairn maintained that natural theology could carry his apologetic thus far. But he further raised the question whether it might not be possible that the existence of evil would explain and justify the Incarnation.

iv. God and History.

Fairbairn's interpretation of history was deeply coloured if not, indeed, regulated by the point of view which Professor Brunner aptly characterizes as 'the illusive optimism of progress of the nineteenth century, the secularized form of Christian eschatology'.[2] History in this view is a sort of 'cosmic escalator'. Since man is free, he can impede the progress or throw the whole process into deep shadow because of the evil he conceives and actualizes; but the purpose immanent in the whole carries on the movement toward its goal in time, the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth. Thus for Fairbairn history had no centre: although he did suggest that we may speak of our Lord 'as the keystone of the arch which spans the gulf of time',[3] yet basically he had the 'inclined-plane' view of history which has no 'end' and in which man is steadily improving. We must think, he urged, not of a single individual or generation but of

> 'an endless series of mortal persons on the way to immortality, each a miniature deity, each in time yet destined for eternity, each with inexhaustible potentialities within him, each realizing himself under the conditions which a measured existence affords, and all contributing to make the wondrous and varied life which we call the history of man'. (4)

Unquestionably Fairbairn was 'more impressed with the sanity than the vanity of things',[5] although he had too poignant a realization of the

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1. Sermons, p. 202.
2. The Mediator, p. 37.
3. Philosophy, p. 567.
4. Ibid, p. 144.
5. Forsyth, op. cit., p. 2.

wickedness of man in society, the suffering caused by injustice of man to man, as well as of the forces apparently working for evil in nature, to make his picture of history wholly idyllic. If he could speak of 'a world which is radiant in its very shadow, and, in spite of all its evil, is good, because capable of being made ever better',[1] he was also keenly aware of the antagonisms between people, whether individuals or groups, when dominated by the unreason of 'petty aims and mean ambitions' which find expression in war or in the 'open violence in a modern city'.[2]

The principle Fairbairn educed in developing his concept of nature, --i. e., that lower forms and orders must always be interpreted in terms of the higher and not vice versa as the naturalistic thinkers insisted on doing,--he also applied to history, which he considered continuous with nature. That the ideas of unity and order became actual in history, despite all natural tendencies in man having been radically opposed to them, he interpreted as pointing to a teleology in man (even as he traced a purpose in the evolutionary process of nature),--a teleology which 'makes man's progress in civilization a progressive realization of reason'.[3] Within the continuum of history he saw the idea of unity very slowly being actualized, and this idea he traced in the development of group life as it spread from family to tribe to nation, in the growth of commerce and industry, in the springing up of the arts, and not least in the creation of religion,--all of these being the work of reason, the underlying unity being seen in the fact of the communicability and exchangeability of these various achievements of the human race.

The idea of order in history, formulated by theology before it was used by philosophy, at first took the form (according to Fairbairn's interpretation) of a voluntarism which made the arbitrary will of God the efficient

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1. Philosophy, p. 131.
2. Ibid, p. 178.
3. Ibid, p. 176. Forsyth epigrammatically expressed Fairbairn's point of view when he said that Fairbairn was more engrossed with the 'rationality of redemption than with the redemption of rationality'. (Op. cit., p. 2.)

cause of movement and change. But the determinism in systems of thought built on this substructure,--and Fairbairn cited as examples the theologies of Augustine and Calvin, and philosophies like those of Spinoza and Leibnitz,--made them unsound since they contradicted the 'most invincible' belief of man in his own freedom. In spite of the rough and tumble aspect of history with its confusion--always coloured to some degree with a haunting sense of futility, --Fairbairn saw in it not chance or fate or necessity, but the moral and rational activity of mind.

> 'The factors of order in history must be stated in terms of mind rather than of matter, i. e., as reasons and motives, as needs and desires, as beliefs and aims, rather than as forces, static and dynamic.' (1)

There is no room in Fairbairn's idea of history for any determinism nor for a 'demonic' factor: for him mind is the maker of order in history. As mind struggles toward self-realization, its movement is progressively away from all restrictions--from all that is not mind which impedes its progress.

Although his own thought is tinged with the positivist notion of history,--conceiving history, that is, in terms of sociology,--Fairbairn maintained that history cannot be explained in the naturalistic notion of the struggle for survival. Actually Fairbairn saw man in history seeking to substitute an ethical process for the struggle for existence in nature. Gradually (he argued) man is succeeding in replacing the struggle in nature by altruistic principles.

Fairbairn's categories of interpretation again are transcendental. History must be conceived in terms of 'some process or power which subordinates first the individual and then the whole to some higher law than the mere struggle to live'.[2] This higher law, which must be authoritative enough to quell the atavistic tendencies in man, is ideal, governing man through his

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1. Philosophy, p. 180.
2. Ibid, p. 184.

reason and conscience. The ideas of unity and order, then, which make up this higher law and which must be germane to man's nature if they are to influence him at all, cannot come from within the evolutionary process, in which the end-all is the survival of the fittest, but must come (so to speak) from the Beyond that is within. That is to say, the source of the higher law which guides history in Fairbairn's view must be transcendent even if expressed immanently. History itself reveals that this authoritative higher law had its beginning in and was sustained by religion. Hence it is to religion that we must look to discover the nature of the source of the higher law of history.

It was Fairbairn's contention, then, that making an unbiased survey of history yields the evidence that man cannot be man without being religious. He further maintained that in man's religions can be found the higher law which constrains him toward order and unity in history. However much his natural impulses cause him to rebel against this constraint and thus retard the outworking of the immanent teleology in history, the movement of progress continues.

Fairbairn's emphasis on inevitable, gradual progress in history mirrors the immanentist, idealist and evolutionary thought of his day, as well as giving a reason for the entire neglect in his writing of the Christian eschatology. But if his immanentism and idealism was revealed in this neglect, his emphasis on personality showed how he retained in his thinking the idea of transcendence. He did not, that is to say, follow the general trend of the British neo-Hegelian school, which tended to minimize the significance of personality in man and to lose the idea of personality in God.[1] He himself pointed out that religions which have stressed immanence (e. g., Hinduism) have not produced creative personalities as have those which have emphasized

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1. Cp. Webb, Religious Thought in England from 1850, ch. v.

transcendence (e. g., Judaism). But those religions which have produced great personalities have been strongly influenced in their line of development by the action of these persons. Not only religion, but the whole course of history, has been shaped by the great personality, since Fairbairn held that men make the historical movement and not the movement the men. Especially in his consideration of the moral consciousness is this emphasis evident. He maintained that the moral law, since immanent in man, must be personal in source as in actualization. It must be realized in persons. His thought concerning personality in relation to morality led him to the following conclusion:[1]

> 'If, then, man, by his moral being touches the skirts of God, and God in enforcing His law is ever, by means of great persons, shaping the life of man to its diviner issues, what could be more consonant, alike with man's nature and God's method of forming or re-forming it, than that He should send a supreme Personality as the vehicle of highest good to the race? Without such a Personality the moral forces of time would lack unity, and without unity they would be without organization, purpose or efficiency. If a Person has appeared in history who has achieved such a position and fulfilled such functions, how can He be more fitly described than as the Son of God and the Saviour of man?'

This quotation illustrates how Fairbairn in his natural theology was all the time pointing to revealed: his discussion of natural religion always included intimations of the 'special' revelation in Christ. This tendency is marked in two other instances, one in his consideration of the problem of evil, when he suggested that the very presence of evil in the world may justify and explain the Incarnation; the other, of greater consequence for his theology, when in his treatment of the processes of nature he seemed to place the Incarnation within the evolutionary process.[2]

> 'Would it not be absolutely consistent with the whole past history of the creative action as written in the living forms which have dwelt and struggled on our earth, that the Creator should do for the higher life of man what He has done for the lower—create the first form,—i. e., first not in the chronological but in the logical and essential, or typical and normative, sense—the form after and from and through which

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1. Philosophy, p. 93.
2. Ibid, p. 60.

the higher life may be realized?'

Fairbairn's apologetic for theism, then, even while directed against the current naturalism of his day, also formed the substructure of his Christian theology. This approach to the Christian religion was exactly opposite to that proposed by Harnack in What is Christianity.[1]

> 'Had they (these lectures) been delivered sixty years ago, it would have been our endeavour to try to arrive by speculative reasoning at some general conception of religion, and then to define the Christian religion accordingly. But we have lately become sceptical about the value of this procedure.'

As we have seen, Fairbairn proposed to 'explain religion through nature and man' and to 'construe Christianity through religion'.[2] According to his system, then, this consideration of his natural theology leads directly to his delineation of our Lord, as historical person and as the determinative ideal for Christianity.

The philosophic principles in which Fairbairn grounded his theology have been traced in this chapter. In the following chapter I propose to consider his historical interpretation of Christ. In succeeding chapters his system of Christian theology and ecclesiology will be sketched.

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1. P. 5. I have taken the quotation from B. L. Hobson's review of Fairbairn's Philosophy, Princeton Theo. Rev., Vol. I, 1903, p. 111.
2. Philosophy, p. vii.

CHAPTER IV. THE JESUS OF HISTORY AND THE CHRIST OF FAITH.

i. The Recovery of the Historical Christ.

The most distinctive feature in modern theology was characterized by Fairbairn as 'a new feeling for Christ'.[1] The rise of the historical method and its application to all areas of thought and research--a tendency eventuating in the so-called 'historicism' during the century--was responsible for this attitude. By this method (Fairbairn and others claimed) the Jesus of history had been recaptured and Christian faith rehabilitated. For only as the historical figure of the Founder of Christianity was clearly portrayed by drawing on materials in the Gospel sources could the Christ of faith as speculatively construed be understood. In other words, the revelation in Christ could be 'checked' only by investigating the original sources.

The 'Jesus of history' was held to be the actual historical Figure, who by means of the historical and comparative methods was discovered to be the supreme Person of all time. The 'Christ of faith', i. e., Jesus as interpreted by His followers, by this approach was considered the ideal of the Christian religion and the factor which made Christianity worthy to be considered the universal religion. In Fairbairn's words: 'There are two distinct. . . points of view, the historical and ideal, or the Person as He lived in the region of reality, and the Person as He lives in the region of the Spirit.'[2] It was Fairbairn's contention, then, that from the vast amount of New Testament research done in the second half of the nineteenth century, the greatest result had been the recovery of the historical Christ.

A critical and constructive historical résumé of the rise and growth of Biblical criticism in Germany and Britain was the canvas, so to say, upon which he limned his own interpretation of our Lord. He contrasted the

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1. Place of Christ, p. 3.
2. City of God, p. 219.

theological revivals in the two countries by pointing out that if the Anglican movement had held more strictly to the scientific, historical spirit in its research, its findings would not so often have violated truth; whereas if the Germans had been more reverent in their approach, they would not so often have been irreligious.

In Germany the movement which was given its initial impetus by the literary work of Lessing, Schiller and Goethe, found its first important exponent in criticism strictly historical in Herder, whose literary insight guided him into shrewd discoveries far ahead of his time (e. g., the Gospel tradition existed before the Gospels).

> 'He showed that to approach Jesus through history'--Fairbairn wrote--'was to make Him a more real, more living, more universal figure, and that to construe Him was to be forced to deal with the Gospels as histories and as literature.' (1)

But modern criticism really developed out of the transcendental philosophy which came to birth in Germany during the early part of the century. For when Strauss, whom Fairbairn called the 'Frankenstein of the Hegelian philosophy'[2], attempted to apply the Hegelian categories to the study of Christ, Fairbairn maintained that he gave the world of thought a jar violent enough to stimulate, in reaction, the modern critical approach to the Bible. The Hegelian conception of philosophy and religion as identical in matter and differing only in form, religion being but the pure thought of philosophy still clothed in pictorial form,--this conception Strauss used as the starting point in his Leben Jesu. With this wholly speculative approach Fairbairn emphasized that history could not be taken seriously: and the life and work of Christ were transformed from the realm of historical event to that of myth. Hegel had evaded the difficulty of reconciling his speculative construction of Christianity with historical fact 'by dealing with the faith as authenticating

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1. Place of Christ, p. 203.
2. Ibid, p. 214.

the fact rather than with the fact as creating and justifying the faith'.[1] Nonetheless theology at first was happy that Hegelianism apparently had reconciled philosophy with itself, and that she could express in her own tongue the thoughts of her erstwhile enemy. But when Strauss carried Hegelianism to its logical outworking in the historical data of Christianity, Fairbairn noted that it did not take long to realize that peace between philosophy and theology had been effected only because Christianity had betrayed its inner citadel, as it were, into the hands of the enemy.

Fairbairn's criticism of Strauss showed that the German iconoclast was but carrying into the interpretation of the Gospel records the speculative a priori method used by the various idealist philosophers in constructing their Christologies. Strauss' Leben Jesu was 'throughout a pure creation of the philosophical imagination'.[2] He made no attempt to place his work within the perspective of its historical setting, tried only to force the evangelical facts into the Hegelian mould. That is to say, he interpreted these facts as being expressed in the sensuous form which needed translation into the notion of pure thought. The Vorstellungen of the Gospel record must become the Begriffe of ideal Christianity. Thus the historical Person of Jesus was lost in order to express the eternal truth of Christianity in the idea. As Fairbairn succinctly summed up Strauss' results:

> 'The unity of the Divine and human natures was realized in man, not in a man. The Incarnation was the self-manifestation of God, the realization of the Idea, not in a single person, but in humanity; not at a particular point of time, but from eternity.' (3)

In order to make this speculation at all compatible with the historical facts of the Gospel, Fairbairn explained that Strauss developed his mythical theory, whereby these facts were made the unconscious creations of the primitive Church, --an apostolic amalgam (so to say) of prophetic promises and reminiscences of

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1. Place of Christ, p. 221.
2. Ibid, p. 235.
3. Ibid, p. 238.

Jesus. Although modifying to some degree this radical theory in the third edition of his Leben Jesu, Strauss completely re-affirmed it in the fourth.

Although Fairbairn held that Strauss' work could hardly be taken as a 'serious performance', yet he made plain the German's manifest contribution to the development of historical criticism. For Strauss stimulated among the strongest thinkers of his day a thorough investigation of the New Testament in order to keep the Gospel sources from being dissolved into myth. The literary criticism of the Tübingen School, led by F. C. Baur, developed at first in concomitance with, then as corrective to, the work of Strauss. Since Fairbairn in his approach to the Christian sources had to meet the criticism of both Strauss and Baur, it is as necessary to consider his critique of the Tübingen School as of Strauss before turning to his own explication of the Gospel records.

Baur like Strauss (Fairbairn pointed out) was essentially Hegelian in his thought and constructed a speculative Christology: but the former retained the historical reality of the Person of Christ as a necessary part of his system and hence had to refute the mythical theory. Baur approached the Gospels through the Epistles and the history of the early Church, and in essence made the mind of Paul the generative power in Christianity. Fairbairn interpreted Baur as having maintained that Christianity developed by a dialectic process in which Jewish Particularism was the thesis (Jesus is Messiah), Universalism the antithesis (Jesus is the Christ, Saviour of the world) and the Catholic Church the synthesis (a new law and sacerdotalism, but a ministry to all). To support each of these tendencies a party arose in the primitive Church, Matthew (the oldest Gospel), Luke and Mark respectively being the work of the Particularist, Universalist and Mediatory groups. The Fourth Gospel Baur placed late in the second century, and he thought of it as showing the process of conciliation in its most elaborated stage. As over against the mythical theory of Strauss, where the Gospel records were explained as unconscious creations of the disciples, Fairbairn showed that Baur and his

school developed the tendency theory, which accounted for the Gospels as the result of conscious design on the part of the writers.

Fairbairn's cardinal criticism of the Tübingen School was that while 'formally historical', it was 'essentially philosophical'. Its internal criticism was all carried out with a priori assumptions, and neglected the historical setting. Fairbairn's more specific criticisms were: (1) Although Baur held that Christianity depends for its very being on the person of Christ, he made the mind of Paul rather than the mind of Christ constitutive. (2) Baur argued that it was the ethical in the Person and work of Christ which made Him significant, and yet he made the 'highly metaphysical Paul. . . His truest exponent, while the intensely ethical James is dismissed as a typical Ebionite'.[1] (3) The 'rival parties' notion appears more significant when considered by itself than when placed in historical connection with Jesus. For instance, why should the Petrine party, bearers of the 'pure original tradition', miss the true import of Christ whereas Paul, who had never even seen our Lord, discovered it? (4) 'The Church, as Baur conceived it, had in its first age well-known men, but almost no literature; in its second a great literature, but almost no known men.'[2] Fairbairn suggested that such a violent anomaly in itself immediately made the Tübingen criticism suspect when viewed in historical perspective.

If the results of Strauss had led to a more thorough-going historical criticism, those of the Tübingen School had made even 'a more radical, and therefore a more historical, criticism an imperious necessity, and had defined as its final yet primary problem the discovery of the historical Christ'.[3] Thus Fairbairn characterized the aim of historical criticism during the formative and constructive years of his own life,—the epoch of the 'lives' of Jesus, so to speak: Renan, Ecce Homo, the new Leben Jesu, Schenkel, Keim, et al. The distinctive factor about this period was that the a priori idealist

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1. Place of Christ, p. 275. 2. Ibid, p. 276. 3. Ibid, p. 277.

method of constructing Christologies was given up, and thought became increasingly historical. In citing some evidences of this growing 'historicism' Fairbairn at the same time was setting forth his own position. Emphasis came to be placed not only on investigating the environment of the primitive Church, but also on studying the interaction between the early Christian organism and its milieu. The dating of the Gospels was changed and Mark was found to be the oldest. Christ was seen more clearly to have been the creator of the society which became the Church. In general the true historical method in criticism had been attained and with it the recovery of the historical Christ as the norm of theological inquiry and of the Church.

Fairbairn opposed the prevailing fashion of his day, to set the historical Christ as antithesis to Christological dogma. Rather he acted as mediator between the two. Thus in respect to Fichte's cardinal notion that the metaphysical alone and not the historical saves, Fairbairn answered that unless rooted in history the metaphysical becomes but abstract speculation, wholly void of reality. 'Where the historical sense is least real, the theological construction is most empty.'[1] But the metaphysical was for him an essential factor in such construction, and he maintained that had it not been 'for the metaphysical conception of Christ, the Christian religion would long ago have ceased to be'.[2]

The quest for the historical Jesus turned the current of theological thought, at first in Germany and then in Britain, into the Christological channel, one instance of the trend having been the exaggerated Christocentrism of the Ritschlian school. This trend as it developed and spread more generally was described by Professor Webb in 1903 when he quoted the then Master of Balliol as speaking of 'some writers who are so zealous against the idea of a

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1. Place of Christ, p. 328. The sentence was written in reference to the Epistle of James.
2. Philosophy, p. 4.

Christianity without Christ, that they are in danger of teaching a Christ without Christianity'. Professor Webb pointed out that nothing was more noticeable in Fairbairn's The Philosophy of the Christian Religion,--and this characteristic is true of all his writing,--than his emphatic protest against this tendency.[1] That is to say, Fairbairn was theo- rather than Christocentric in his critical and constructive work. To be sure, Christ held a central place in his theology: and yet it was always Christ as the interpretation and interpreter--or revelation--of God.

ii. The Jesus of History.

How can the Jesus of history, the man of Nazareth, be reconciled with the Christ of faith, who is the Head of the Church and the Master whom Christians profess as Lord? This is the problem, as Fairbairn stated it, which faces historians and philosophers, and indeed anyone who seeks to understand Christianity. The relation of Jesus who lived in space and time to the Christ of the creeds, of the historical person to the metaphysical figure: this central mystery Fairbairn named the supreme paradox of religion. He held it could be transcended only through a dialectic process whereby the apparent antithesis is overcome in an all-embracing synthesis. For if the attempt be made to resolve the paradox in natural terms and consider the Christ of the creeds merely as an apotheosis of a Galilean peasant, then Fairbairn argued that we fail to account for what the Christian religion has accomplished in history or for the continuing way in which our Lord has gripped and held the hearts of those who follow Him. As we have seen, Fairbairn did not seek to approach this problem directly on the basis of the general canons of criticism which he held should be applied to the Founders of all the historical religions, but gave answers only by implication through the pages of his exegetical

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1. Review of Philosophy, Jl. of Theo. Studies, Vol. IV, 1903, p. 292. Fairbairn himself spoke of a fault committed in many an evangelical sermon, that 'the Son has been so preached as to hide the Father'. (Place of Christ, p. 381.)

interpretation of the New Testament.

That the Synoptic Gospels were written after the Apostles had already interpreted the life of Jesus and had come to think of Him as the Incarnate Son of God does not in any way lessen--may indeed enhance--their value as historical records of the origin of Christian faith (according to Fairbairn), since mediated history with its greater perspective is more trustworthy than immediate. The Synoptic Gospels are of such singular significance just because written after a period of Apostolic activity, for thus they are 'lives' written not of a Teacher or Leader but of the Founder of Christianity, One who was known to have created a new religion.[1] Thus Fairbairn said:

> 'As a teacher there are many men in many lands and times with whom He may be compared; but as a creative and sovereign personality there are in the whole of history only two or three, if indeed there are so many, with any claim to stand by His side. As a Teacher He is a natural person, with historical antecedents, a social environment, a religious ancestry, and a position honourable but not unique amid the great masters of mind; but as a sovereign personality He is a new Being, without father, or mother, or genealogy, separate, supreme, creating by His very appearing a new spiritual type or order.'

The Evangelists wrote out of the background of what Fairbairn termed this 'prophetic and creative hypothesis' which the primitive Christian community had formulated: that Jesus was the Messiah sent by God, nay, rather God Himself manifested in flesh and appearing in time. With this background the writers of the Synoptic Gospels delineated a Figure who is a unity, the divine and human so conjoined that each contributes equally to portraying this Person who stands out so vividly alive from the pages of the record. Fairbairn contended that the remarkable verisimilitude in the Gospel record is powerful evidence that this writing is no fabrication, even as its restraint and its detailed local colour is evidence that it is not merely part of a mythologizing process. The Gospels cannot be considered as idealizations: their writers speak as 'men who have stood face to face with the reality, and

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1. Philosophy, p. 304.

are conscious of only describing what they saw'.[1]

Our Lord is pictured in the Synoptic Gospels, as Fairbairn interpreted the record, as both natural and supernatural. His human nature was emphasized. He was a man who suffered the vicissitudes of human life, even as He appreciated its joys and shared in its fellowships. The realness of the temptations—and the temptations in Fairbairn's view meant that our Lord was tempted to let the divine side of His nature overshadow and negative the human—and the agony in Gethsemane were extreme examples of the full humanity of our Lord. But He was fully conscious of His supernatural powers, and in the miracles His physical transcendence can be clearly seen, the Person as well as His works here having transcended nature without having been contra-natural. The miracles were not wonders, however, nor even special evidences of our Lord's divinity, but rather (Fairbairn urged) a natural expression of our Lord's character,—a spontaneous expression, as it were, of His gracious beneficence. That His supernatural powers were used only to benefit others, never Himself, is used as evidence by Fairbairn to show that our Lord's humanity was absolutely real.[2] They were the expected outworking of His perfect obedience as Son to the Father; and even as God does not negative man's freedom although man disobeys Him, so our Lord never employed His powers to invade, so to say, another's personality. But though He had supernatural powers, Fairbairn maintained that He was not omniscient. His knowledge, as He

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1. Philosophy, p. 320.
2. In his efforts to explain the miracles without sacrificing the complete humanity of our Lord, Fairbairn's exposition is confusing, and it is not possible to discover exactly what his point of view was. He spoke, for instance, of our Lord's acts being 'naturally supernatural', of the miracle 'as the normal speech of His will', of a 'normal manhood' with a 'supernatural function', of a 'personal being' and an 'official capacity'. The use of such phrases was apparently due to Fairbairn's effort to avoid any form of Docetism on the one hand, or on the other to keep from being 'unscientific'.

Himself realized,[1] was limited; and His life, since human, was involved in the contingency of historical events. 'Experience was indeed to Him, as to us, a teacher.'[2]

But the moral transcendence of Jesus was of vastly more significance than the physical. Fairbairn portrayed with eloquence the moral beauty of our Lord, emphasizing especially that He never showed any consciousness of sin and forgave sin while apparently Himself having no need of forgiveness. Our Lord's sinlessness was not impeccability, Fairbairn explained: that is to say, His was not the power of being unable to sin, but of being able not to sin. This, too, was part of His being completely human. In His sinlessness He did not show Himself independent, rather wholly dependent on and obedient to the Father's will.[3]

But this moral superiority of Jesus was more than a personal quality, since Fairbairn always underlined the point that our Lord was proto-type for collective man. Thus the moral perfection of Christ became an ethical ideal which because of its originality, catholicity and potency established Christianity as the supreme moral religion. Through the perfection of our Lord's moral character He created in man a sense of sin and a longing for holiness, both at once more poignant, more heart-searching, than he had ever before had: 'a fear of sin that almost craves annihilation' and yet 'a love of holy being

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1. 'Christ recognizes the limitations of His own knowledge (Mk. xiii, 32: cf. xiv, 35, 36). He knew, indeed, what was in man (Jn. ii, 25: cf. Mt. ix, 4; Luke v, 22; Mt. xii, 25; Luke xi, 17). But this was the note of the prophet. (Luke vii, 39). There were things in man, too, that surprised Him (Mk. vi, 6; Mt. viii, 10); so in nature (Mk. xi, 13).' (Place of Christ, p. 353.)
   Bishop Gore in his article in Lux Mundi (1890) had broken new ground in interpretations of our Lord by insisting on the limitation of knowledge in the Incarnation.
2. Philosophy, p. 395.
3. Although Fairbairn states that Jesus 'claimed to do always the will of God', Findlay points out that only once (Jn. viii, 46) does He actually allude to His sinlessness. Cp. Jesus, Divine and Human, p. 48.

that yearns towards the vision of God'.[1] It can readily be seen that Fairbairn held the view of our Lord which finds its culmination in the Abelardian theory of the Atonement. In this view our Lord is considered as the supreme exemplar for man, the educator of the human race, a dynamic factor which as it works on man can transform him into being what Christ Himself was. Fairbairn is emphatic in this particular connection that to be sinless is to be not God, but God-like, which is to say that our Lord was the supreme religious personality of all time. He gave an example which, if man follows, constrains his obedience to the Will of God. He demonstrated to man what he as man is capable of becoming,--indeed what he is potentially,—if he wholly surrenders himself to God. Fairbairn's notion, in short, was that our Lord 'did not so much transcend as realize nature, though to be the only person in history who achieves it is to transcend empirical nature while realizing the ideal'.[2]

To limn the Jesus of history involved three steps for Fairbairn: the first two the tracing of the physical and moral transcendence of our Lord, the third the 'attempt to construe Jesus from within' --what Brunner calls a 'psychological construction, which always means a natural explanation'.[3] Fairbairn maintained that the Synoptic picture of our Lord revealed Him as becoming conscious of His Messiahship at the time of His Baptism.[4] His true identity Jesus disclosed gradually to the disciples, so that it was not so much disclosure on His part as discovery on theirs. In the early ministry our Lord's consciousness of His Messiahship was revealed (thus Fairbairn's delineation) by His realization of His close connection with the Jewish law, which He came to fulfil; His relation to sinners, whom He came to seek and save; His conditions for discipleship, that He would brook no rival; His sense of personal sovereignty, since His followers were to be persecuted for His

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1. Philosophy, pp. 372-3.
2. Ibid, p. 378.
3. Ibid, p. 389.
4. The Mediator, p. 362.

sake; His unique relation to God, that is, His clear and continuous awareness of Sonship. The disciples' gradual discovery of Jesus' consciousness of His unique and pre-eminent position culminated in Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi, which in Fairbairn's view showed that they had finally realized that He was the Christ, the Messianic King.

But the other names Christ applied to Himself--Son of God and Son of Man--are equally significant. Fairbairn made clear that while our Lord completely identified Himself with man, yet 'He detaches Himself from man and distinguishes Himself as in a pre-eminent sense the Son of God'.[1] Although in the Synoptic Gospels He never applied the name to Himself, yet in all the Gospels He is portrayed as being vividly aware all the time of being in a supremely unique relation with God. Fairbairn's explication of this idea is the heart of his entire theological construction, that the continuous apprehension of our Lord's filial relationship with God was the constitutive idea in His consciousness. 'Son of Man', a conception which Fairbairn held came to Jesus from Daniel and Enoch, signified to our Lord that He stood as a representative person to universal man as the Messiah had stood to the Jewish people. As such, while bearing within Himself common humanity, He at the same time is alone the norm for humanity. Hence in the full significance of these two names, Son of God and Son of Man, Fairbairn maintained that the whole meaning of our Lord's life was expressed.

> 'The ideal man was the conscious Son of God, and His function was by the creation of the ideal consciousness to create ideal men. . . Sonship is of the essence of humanity as paternity of God, and so He who is by nature Son of God appears as Son of man, that men through Him may attain the filial state and spirit and relation. . . And as necessary and unique He is universal.' (2)

Once the disciples had appreciated who He was (as Fairbairn expounded the Gospel record), our Lord unfolded to them how His mission must

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1. Place of Christ, p. 360.
2. Ibid, pp. 368, 369, 370.

of necessity end: thus began the new teaching which arose out of His growing realization that He would be killed by the forces which were arraying themselves against Him. In His capacity as Son of Man, Jesus realized that He would be sacrificed to reconcile God and man. He thought of His death not as a martyrdom, however, but strictly as a sacrifice, since He gave up His life with perfect freedom in obedience to the Father's will to rescue (ransom) man (collective mankind) from the sin which enslaves him. Fairbairn contended that the note of sternness in the Jerusalem ministry toward those who rejected Him was due to our Lord's realization that the very persons He would die to save were by killing Him making their salvation 'a matter more infinitely hard, more vastly improbable'.[1] This recoil not from death but from a death which seemed to involve its perpetrators in 'inexpiable guilt' caused not only the agony in the Garden, but the death on the Cross, which was due to a broken heart rather than to the actions of those who had hung Him there. Fairbairn apparently followed this line of reasoning to make indubitable his conclusion, that 'the death which redeems was all the work of the Redeemer'.[2]

iii. The Christ of Faith.

If as we have seen Fairbairn conceived the task of the Synoptists to have been to depict the 'Jesus of history'—and he spoke of the three first Gospels as 'histories'—he considered that the Apostolic Epistles (and he thought especially of the principal Pauline Epistles, together with the Epistles to the Hebrews and the Fourth Gospel) set forth the 'Christ of faith', developing a doctrine of the Person. This point of view is succinctly expressed in a passage which is of central importance as an epitomization of Fairbairn's

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1. Philosophy, p. 431.
2. Ibid, p. 433. The words spoken to the woman who anointed our Lord's feet in Simon's house Fairbairn interprets as indicating that Jesus was conscious that His mission and message had a universal and enduring significance. The Supper, moreover, further explicated our Lord's consciousness of Himself as a sacrifice for mankind, since He identified Himself (concluded on next page)

whole attitude in this matter.

> 'In the former (the Synoptic Gospels) we have the representation of a real individual who lived, suffered, and died, and who, as regards His character, words, and acts, may be criticized and appreciated like any other historical person; in the latter (the Apostolic Epistles) we have this Person regarded sub specie aeternitatis, interpreted according to His place and function in universal history and as the central term in a theology or system of religious thought. The name of the uninterpreted person, the hero of the spontaneous biographies, is Jesus of Nazareth, but the name of the interpreted person, the Being who exists to thought and for it, is Christ; and these two are as distinct yet as indissolubly related as the mathematical diagram on the blackboard and the mathematical truth in the mind, which is by the diagram made explicit and applied to the interpretation of nature. In other words, Jesus is a symbol which the Epistles explicate for human belief and apply to human experience, individual and collective.' (1)

It was in the Pauline Epistles, written within a generation of our Lord's death that the new, seminal idea, as Fairbairn described it, unparalleled in human thought theretofore, was developed: namely, that Christ, in whom dwelt the fulness of the Godhead bodily, is the normative type for the new humanity which is established when mankind through Him is reconciled to God, whose only Son He is. Thus Fairbairn seeks to show how St. Paul speculatively construed Jesus into the doctrine of His Person, how for the first time he made articulate the identification of the Christ (the office) with Jesus (the Person).

> 'So the Christ was at first like a predicate waiting for a subject; it denoted an office which no one had as yet filled; but by the time Paul began to write the office had been so occupied that it could never again be vacant: the personal name, Jesus, had become official, signified the Saviour; the official name, Christ, had become personal, denoted Jesus.' (2)

In this way Fairbairn explained that within the Pauline theology an abstract was transformed into a vibrant monotheism, interpreted in terms of the Fatherhood and Sonship within the Godhead. The Pauline soteriology, largely expressed in the antitheses, Fairbairn showed to have been based on St. Paul's conception

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(continued from previous page)
with the Paschal lamb: thus Fairbairn maintained that Jesus considered Himself as both sacrifice and host, as the one being offered to redeem mankind, as the other Himself identified with mankind which made the sacrifice.

1. Philosophy, p. 438.
2. Place of Christ, p. 306.

of the purpose of God, set forth in the Epistles as having been fulfilled first through the natural law within man but having come to its complete realization only in the transcendent act of God in the Incarnation. Thus salvation was explained in the earlier Epistles as a historical, in the later as a cosmic process.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews our Lord is interpreted through the categories of Levetical Hebraism as the Son of God, although Fairbairn did not fail to stress, as he also did in his treatment of the Pauline literature, that the humanity of Jesus was at the same time made poignantly real. Fairbairn noted especially that in this Epistle both God and Christ, although distinguished from each other, were termed ὁ θεός, without the author having felt that he was betraying his intense Jewish monotheism. Fairbairn further stressed that by the writer's identification of Christ as both priest and sacrifice, he cleansed the new religion of any sacerdotalistic tendencies.

The motive of the writer of the Fourth Gospel was 'a transcendent enthusiasm for a person',[1] and Fairbairn sought to show that he attempted what no other New Testament writer had done: to bring together into a unified 'tragic parable' the speculative idea of Christ and the personal history of Jesus. Fairbairn depicted the author of this Gospel as conceiving God not as solitary but through eternity with the Logos, who when He became flesh was the Son, the only begotten of the Father. What the writer of this Gospel did,--and here Fairbairn interpreted the Fourth Gospel, so to speak, in terms of his own doctrine of the Trinity, in which he closely followed St. Augustine,--was to personalize the transcendental term Logos (which had originated with Heraclitus and passed from him through the Stoics to Philo).

> 'A solitary Deity was an impotent abstraction, without life, without love, void of thought, incapable of movement, and divorced from

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1. Place of Christ, p. 345.

> all reality. But his (i. e., the author's vision passed through the region of speculation, and discovered the Person who realized his ideal.'[1]

The Logos he then called Son, and made this person take flesh, indentifying Him with Jesus of Nazareth. In this way, Fairbairn concluded, the writer of this Gospel made the life of God assume visible, tangible, knowable form in the life of the Son.

Granting that these Apostolic writers speculatively construed this stupendous idea which brought to its close the ancient world and formed the mind which created a new era, it was still necessary to explain the genesis of the idea. The very core of Fairbairn's thought is that this creative idea could have had its inception only in the mind of our Lord. To establish this thesis, he examined and repudiated in turn three theories: that the Christ-idea originated in the mind of St. Paul (as the Tübingen School had contended), that the idea was developed through a mythologizing process (the theory Strauss had promulgated), and that Christianity is essentially a syncretism.

Many of the current speculations about St. Paul Fairbairn passed by as being, if not entirely insignificant or false, at the least quite inadequate to be considered sufficient causes to have generated the Christ-idea in his mind. Two factors, however, he thought to be of cardinal importance: (1) that the Christ-idea, so radically antagonistic, apparently, to St. Paul's rigid and stern Jewish monotheism, could so quickly and tenaciously root itself in the Apostle's mind can be understood only by realizing that for St. Paul the new idea 'prevailed only because he conceived that through Him (Christ) the one God was made the only God of universal man';[2] (2) that the impotence St. Paul had felt under Judaism to obey the law, and the new power to obey which he saw in followers of the Nazarene and which he himself experienced after his conversion could be explained only by assuming that some dynamic, overwhelming

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1. Philosophy, p. 455.
2. Ibid, p. 465.

occurrence had transformed his life. Yet significant as these factors were, Fairbairn maintained that they failed to account for St. Paul's having conceived Jesus not simply as Messiah, but as essentially Divine, nor how such an idea could change so completely his whole Weltanschauung, nor yet how it could be the cause of a new religion rising into power throughout the then-known world with what seemed to be incredible speed, nor finally how the idea could hold the loyalty not only of St. Paul but of the other Apostles with whom on other points he differed widely.

According to the mythical theory, Fairbairn asserted that Jesus lost His historical but retained His ideal significance. Those who held this theory, as Fairbairn expounded their view, explained the whole idea of Christ as based on visions and interpretations of visions which came to the disciples after Jesus' death: for in spite of their despair, they had such an invincible faith that it was impossible for them to give up their Messianic idea of their Master. So the Resurrection came to be concieved as God's action, the crucifixion as man's; then even the latter was interpreted as having been directly motivated by the Will of God, those persons who actually seemed to perpetrate the act having been but pawns in the hand of God. And so the mythologizing process continued, achieving at length a supreme literary culmination in the Pauline Epistles, the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Fourth Gospel. Fairbairn pointed to three obvious defects in this mythical theory: it lacked proof, since Biblical evidence in the Acts of the Apostles used to establish the theory was manifestly of later date than St. Paul's early writing; it was improbable that the early disciples, all simple folk, could conceive and carry out such a sophisticated scheme; it was inadequate, because it made the Christ-idea, which turned the then-known world up-side down, the chance product of the dreams of visionaries. To turn this architectonic idea of all history into the product of chance or accident, Fairbairn iterated more than once, was tantamount to

conceiving the whole universe not as cosmos, but chaos.

But there are more serious criticisms which Fairbairn directed against the mythical theory, since he held that it offends 'against certain of the laws which govern human development'.[1] According to the first law which Fairbairn stated, the imaginative faculty which stimulates the mythical tendency always precedes speculation. The older Biblical critics, aware of this order of development, considered the Gospels as products of the mythologizing tendency since they thought the Gospels represented the oldest literature in the New Testament. But actually the authentic Pauline Epistles are the oldest; and Fairbairn argued that it is just in these that a metaphysical system highly speculative in form had been worked out, in which a whole philosophy of history and of the relations between God and man had been promulgated. This system cannot be explained as due to this mythical tendency stimulated by a 'reminiscent and regretful love' for a dead Leader, since its author did not even know our Lord in the flesh.

Fairbairn further contended that the material with which the mythical impulse works is historical incident and anecdote, whereas speculation ordinarily follows upon such imaginative interpretations and tries to work them into a rational theory. But the Pauline Epistles were concerned not so much with history as with the Person of Christ, speculatively construed.

The third law of development which Fairbairn explicated is that there must be close agreement between speculative construction and the environment in which it takes place. In the instance of the early Christian literature, however, the development of the Christ-idea is wholly alien to the Jewish background in which St. Paul's mind was steeped,—a Jewish background in which the notion prevailed that God is wholly Other than man. Had the idea of the Incarnation sprung up on Greek soil, Fairbairn granted that we might well speak

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1. Philosophy, p. 470.

of apotheosis. In this connection Fairbairn asserted that the term is radically incorrect (although it will be remembered that when he was considering the relation of Christianity to Buddhism and Islam he was not so outspoken on this point), for Judaism knew nothing of the Greek idea that God could become man--or man, God. In fact the most remarkable feature of the beginning of the Christian religion is that

> 'the idea of the Son of God who was equal with God, though it seemed most seriously to threaten the divine unity, has yet been the supreme means of its conservation. And this relation to the idea of one God makes the Christian incarnation a belief at once singular and original.'(1)

The place given to Christ, moreover, intensified, did not lessen the difference between God and man which the Hebrews had always stressed,--God's eternity over against man's finitude. Fairbairn further pointed out that the formulation of the Christ-idea was in no way a 'deificatory' process, since the Apostolic writers 'would not have described as divine any one they did not believe to be essentially God; and so they never represent Christ as attaining Deity or achieving a rank which He had not known before'.[2] That is to say, they always propounded the idea of the pre-existence of Christ.

The Christian religion, then, could not have originated in a mythologizing process, according to Fairbairn's argument. No more could it have found its beginning in a syncretism, though no doubt it was influenced by religious and philosophic ideas current in its formative years. But Fairbairn maintained that a syncretism *per se* is always the outcome of a decadent movement: yet one of the most striking features of Christianity was the fresh verve, so to say, which it brought to a decaying civilization. More specifically, Fairbairn suggested that the leaders in the primitive Church were too ignorant of other theologies and philosophies to draw consciously on them in formulating the guiding principles of Christianity. Moreover, these principles, rather than being formulated, grew as the living organism--the primitive Christi-

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1. *Philosophy*, p. 474.
2. *Ibid*.

an society--developed. For the Christian religion in these formative years 'behaved as a living being behaved'[1], the architectonic idea which was its immanent life force (to carry on Fairbairn's figure) having been the faith in Jesus Christ,--the dual belief composite of remembrance of Jesus of Nazareth, the historical Figure, and of the transcendental ideal which had been speculatively construed by the Apostles.

Thus the notion that Christianity is a syncretism Fairbairn declared to be as false as that it originated in the mind of St. Paul or through a mythologizing process carried on during the Apostolic Age. The genesis of this creative Christ-idea (as we have seen) Fairbairn could trace to only one source: the mind of our Lord. Apostolic thought could not otherwise be accounted for. Without this idea that Jesus was the Incarnate Son of God, which was our Lord's own idea of Himself and which He passed on to His disciples, the sect of the Nazarenes might have developed, but not the Christian religion. As it developed, Fairbairn held that this new religion first became different from, then independent of Judaism; after that it absorbed all that was good in other religions, and finally, with Christ triumphant, became the religion which alone is true, which alone is 'as universal in its unity as the one God in His sole sovereignty'[2]. The historical Jesus in His life on earth showed how the religion was to be expressed in life: but what made the religion a power and gave the Church Catholic its inception was 'the significance His person had for thought, the way in which it lived to faith, the mode in which it interpreted to reason God and the universe, man and history'[3].

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1. Philosophy, p. 518.
2. Ibid, p. 478.
3. Ibid.

iv. The Christ of Faith in History.

'The conception of Christ stands related to history as the idea of God is related to nature, i. e., each is in its own sphere the factor of order, or the constitutive condition of a rational system.'[1] In this way Fairbairn linked his explication of the theistic proofs with his portrayal of Jesus Christ and His place in history, the two names thus used together signifying for him the union, as it were, of the historical Jesus and the ideal Christ. Considered thus, Fairbairn rhetorically asked, 'May we not speak of Him as the keystone of the arch which bridges the gulf of time?'[2] The answer for him obviously is in the affirmative, since he thought of the triumphant Christ as the determinative principle which has regulated the development of history since the Incarnation.

Taking the Christ-ideal as construed by the Apostles, Fairbairn argued that it could have given birth only to a theology, not to a religion. A religion could have developed only as this creative idea was released, so to say, into the rough and tumble of history, where the idea and its environment could freely interact. This approach brought him to consider the doctrine of development, especially as it had been brought specifically into theology by Newman.

Newman's idea of development as applied to the Christian religion Fairbairn criticized on three counts. It was logical rather than biological. Its starting point was too late. The end product whose development he sought to trace was but a fraction of the whole collective organism which had been involved in this process. This is to say: Newman tried to trace the development of an institution without taking into account the environment in which it developed. His starting point, moreover, was the primitive Church and not the creative Personality who formed it. Finally he considered only the Roman Catholic Church as the end result of this developmental process: actually all

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1. Philosophy, p. 18.
2. Ibid, p. 567.

Churches, all denominations, must be taken into account if the investigation is to be scientific. Hence Fairbairn maintained that Newman used the theory of development not for historical but for polemic or apologetic purposes, using history only to illustrate his own especial thesis, that thesis having been that the development of doctrine was to proceed under an external, infallible authority, namely, the Roman Church. All this was but to set aside the historical method of interpreting processes--the evolutionary, biological method--for a method which lays down as presuppositions principles which themselves (according to the biological method) must be investigated.

This brief résumé of Fairbairn's critique of Newman shows that his own method of approach was the evolutionary, which studied the organism as living 'within a living world, affected by all its forces, and sensitive to its every change'.[1] In short, Fairbairn contended that the action and interaction of both the organism and the environment must be investigated if the process of development is to be traced. The organism to be studied is not the Church, but the historical Christ; and the environment includes both the 'society He created' and the world in which that society was born and lived. With this principle Fairbairn sought to trace the development which occurred as the Christ of faith acted in history. In this development--to use the terms which he employed in so many ways, formal and material--the material factor is the mind of our Lord, the formal the environment.

Within the Jewish environment of the Apostolic Christian group the Christian Church came into being. Fairbairn pointed out that this organism could develop only out of the determinative principles of the religion. Basically these were the Christian idea of God, the new worship and the new ethic. If followed, these could not but have shaped Christianity into a universal religion. For Fairbairn maintained that even as God interpreted by

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1. Place of Christ, p. 35.

Christ is in essence Father, so man 'by the very fact of his creation in Christ was constituted a son'.[1] This is to say that Christ changed not only man's idea of God, but his idea of himself, since our Lord, by assuming, dignified human nature. But to think of all men as sons, potential or actual, of the Father of our Lord was to make both the Christian worship and ethic universal, since both were rooted in God as interpreted by Christ, even as both were determined and built about the death of Christ.

Fairbairn's own sharp antipathy to all sacerdotalism is suggested by the detail with which he explained that the early Christian society was held together by a priestless religion, without a trace of sacerdotal custom or law. A universal religion cannot be tied either to local shrines or institutions of worship, and Fairbairn showed how the early Christians eliminated both by making the only institution of worship ideal. In other words, Christ Himself replaced the Temple as the institution of worship; and since He was interpreted both as priest and sacrifice, He established an unmediated relationship between God and man which superseded the Levitical system of formal sacerdotalism. Similarly our Lord transcended the Rabbinical Law, since through Him as Redeemer man was to gain salvation not through his own efforts, but solely through the grace of God. Fairbairn further interpreted the ethic of Christ as embracing a social ideal and method which rose above all distinctions of race, location or time. The ideal Fairbairn defined 'as perfect obedience towards God, embodied in perfect duty towards man'.[2] By the social method was meant that men should by imitating become like Christ, Christ Himself on this basis furnishing the 'moral dynamic' for man to realize the ideal. Because both the social ideal and method were demonstrated in the life of our Lord, Fairbairn concluded that His Person symbolized, as it were, all that the

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1. Philosophy, p. 543.

2. Ibid, p. 524.

Christian society should have been in its early days, or that the Church should be at the present time. Thus His Person continues to be constitutive of the Christian Church, and faith in God through Him is the central nerve of Christian worship and of the Christian ethic.

But already in the sub-Apostolic Age, Fairbairn explained that the new religion tended to become more legal and less ethical; and some of the Old Testament ceremonialism was again creeping back into worship. The thought of the ancient Church--and the point is important for Fairbairn's later argument in regard to the Church--developed from this general point of view rather than from the Apostolic. In these days Christianity was influenced in doctrine by the pagan philosophy, in organization by Roman polity, in cultus by the popular religions.

Fairbairn further traced the various changes effected in Christianity by the action on it of the environment. Although the delineation of these changes has become the commonplace in all considerations of Christian thought, Fairbairn's treatment of this development is suggestive and original. He began by stressing the importance of Philo to the development of thought. By effecting a confluence of Hebrew monotheism with Platonic idealism, Philo changed the approach of both theology and philosophy: for Fairbairn asserted that 'God holds a place in all systems subsequent to Philo such as He had never held in those prior to him'[1], since the personal, ethical God of the Hebrews after Philo always had to be taken into account in any philosophy which purported to explain man and the universe.

The further development of Christian thought (as Fairbairn described it) centred more or less about the Incarnation and its significance for man. The emphasis of the Greek Fathers, nurtured in Hellenic philosophy, was naturally metaphysical; of the Roman Fathers, trained in Roman jurisprudence, legal and forensic. For this reason Fairbairn suggested that the Eastern

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1. Place of Christ, p. 65.

Fathers were theologians, whereas the Western tended to be anthropologists. According to Fairbairn's interpretation, the Greek theology failed because it became more metaphysical than ethical, became abstracted from the Christian history, and did not develop its doctrine in terms of the consciousness of Christ, though it did endeavour to construe a scientific doctrine of the Godhead and to resolve the antinomy between the transcendence and immanence of God. The Roman theology, on the other hand, developing especially under Tertullian, changed the Christian religion 'from a system priestless and spiritual into one sacerdotal and sensuous'[1]; the ecclesia became a civitas, and God, together with Christ and His death, came to be conceived wholly in juridical terms, a process which eventuated in the formulation of the satisfaction theory of the Atonement and the basic tenets of the Roman Catholic Church.

The Western Church quickly settled into a traditionalism, and Fairbairn pointed out that from the eighth century onward the fresh stimulation to thought came from transalpine minds, whereas the cisalpine leaders were responsible for polity and administration. The period of scholasticism, beginning with Anselm and governed by Aristotle, was concerned with three questions: a religious (the relation of faith to authority and knowledge), a theological (the exact nature of the work of Christ), and a philosophical (the contest between Nominalism and Realism). But however significant scholasticism was for the development of theology (according to Fairbairn's review of its history), it became increasingly apparent that the Church was drifting farther and farther away from its creative source. 'While the Christianity the Church had made was known, the Christianity that had made the Church was not.'[2]

The Renaissance brought the Christian humanists face to face with the originating mind of Christianity, and Fairbairn stressed that the only

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1. Place of Christ, p. 110 2. Ibid, p. 132.

outcome could have been the comparison of the 'parent form' with the 'living organism'. Out of this comparison, as it grew vivid and sharply outlined, came the Reformation with its attempt, as Fairbairn phrased it, to 'return to the Christianity of Christ',[1] and its formulation of two distinctive doctrines: Luther's justification by faith and Calvin's sovereignty of the Will of God. Finally Fairbairn showed how theology became fixed in various systems in the seventeenth century: the Roman Catholic predominantly institutional; the Lutheran essentially soteriological, based on the Scriptures and the Sacraments; the Reformed voluntaristic; and the English, as expressed in the High Church and the Broad, institutional,--as expressed in the Puritan and Evangelical, a modified Reformed theology.

The significance of tracing this development of theology for Fairbairn was that in it he saw the material factor of Christianity remaining ever the same while the formal principle (i. e., the mind of Christ) was interpreted differently in accordance with the changing environment. The following quotation will illustrate Fairbairn's power in making historical generalizations and will summarize his conception of this theological development.[2]

> 'The direct effect of every fresh return to the sources has been the enlargement and re-formation of religious thought. This is true in the case of the anti-Gnostic Fathers, whose use of the sources is seen in the way they transcend rather than repeat tradition, and leave a theology richer than anything that had preceded it, especially in those elements most distinctive of the original and Apostolic Word. Augustine marks another moment of return; and his pre-eminence over Tertullian is due to his deeper reading of Paul. The Reformation is a similar moment, the only possible result of the recovered knowledge of the Scriptures by men who believed that they revealed the mind of Christ and His Apostles.'

The recovery of the historical Christ in the nineteenth century (as explained at the beginning of this chapter) was a more meaningful return to the sources than any of these previous ones, for Fairbairn stressed that the cardinal influence in all these earlier 'returns' was Pauline. But in the nineteenth century the effort was made to return directly, so to say, to

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1. Place of Christ, p. 141.
2. Ibid, p. 187.

the mind of Christ: and Fairbairn considered this the starting point for any theological construction. Such construction he felt to be especially necessary after the searching literary and historical criticism of the latter half of the century; and as more necessary, also more possible if, as he said, 'a Christian theology means a theology of Christ, at once concerning Him and derived from Him',[1] since Fairbairn contended that knowledge of Him was greater at the close of the Nineteenth century than at any previous moment in history.

From this historical survey the leading principles of Fairbairn's theology have emerged,--the formal and material, respectively the consciousness of Christ and the Fatherhood of God. The mind of Christ was organized (as it were) about the central awareness of Sonship, of which the Divine Fatherhood is correlate. Since our Lord was human and an integral part of the race, the Sonship extends to all humanity, even as the Fatherhood is for all men.

This distinction between the two principles Fairbairn based on the older systems of theology, where the principium cognoscendi and principium essendi were differentiated, and more directly on the later distinction in Reformation theology, where (as he pointed out) the formal principle was conceived as the Scriptures; the material, justification by faith. He maintained, however, that the Scriptures (or the Scriptures and tradition, or the Scriptures and the Church, or the Church alone) do not give an adequate formal principle; nor is the Incarnation as the Anglicans (following the Lutherans) held, nor justification by faith, nor the Church, nor the sovereign Will of God, adequate as material principle. Against all these notions Fairbairn contended that the only adequate formal principle for Christian theology is the mind of our Lord; and there, as we have seen, he pointed out that we find the material principle to be the Fatherhood of God. About these cardinal principles he constructed his dogmatic theology: hence this review of his conception

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1. Place of Christ, p. 297.

of the historical and ideal Christ leads naturally into a consideration of his system of Christian theology.

Note on Chapter IV.

Sections i and iv of this chapter for the most part are synopses of divisions in Book I of Place of Christ: Section i, of Division II, "Historical Criticism and the History of Christ"; Section iv, of Division I, "The Law of Development in Theology and the Church".

CHAPTER V. FAIRBAIRN'S SYSTEM OF CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY.

The problem[1] which faced Fairbairn as a theologian was set by two dominant trends in British religious thought. One was his inheritance as a Free Churchman of Puritan theology, as modified successively by Arminianism, the Evangelical Revival, Socinianism, and finally in the nineteenth century by the influence of Erskine and Campbell in Scotland and Maurice and Robertson in England. The other trend was the Tractarian movement, grooved theologically by 'Newman's attitude on Justification by Faith, on the sources and bases of authority in religion, on the agencies and channels of grace'.[2] Both of these tendencies had a direct and potent influence on Fairbairn's thought, the former more specifically on his theology, the latter on his ecclesiology.

The Puritan theology, erected on the substructure of Calvin's voluntaristic doctrine of the Sovereignty of God, had been strongly predestinarian and laid its chief emphasis on the saving work of Christ in the Atonement as the means of redemption. The Arminian theology placed its emphasis on human free will and the rights and dignity of man as conditioning the absolute rule of God's Will. Wesley in the Evangelical Revival, because of the religious power of the movement he started, modified the rigid Calvinism of Nonconformity by the very vehemence of his Arminianism. The Evangelical Revival had brought the doctrines of Justification and Atonement into the focus of attention, and it was against these that the Socinians directed their attack, itself based on the notion of the mutual independence of God and man. This controversy was only beginning to lose its force at the midpoint of the century. Fairbairn pointed out[3] that

> 'it is a note distinctive of the period that the ideas of Atonement which were assumed on the Evangelical side in order to meet the Socinian attack were drawn from an Arminian rather than a Calvinistic

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1. Cp. supra, Ch. I, pp. 5-11.
2. "Dale as a Theologian" by Fairbairn, Ch. 27 in Life of R. W. Dale, pp.698-9.
3. Ibid, pp. 702, 703.

> source,--from Hugo Grotius rather than Turretine. . . . Their distinctive position may be described as an attempt to reconcile a universal Atonement with a particular Salvation through a theory of Public Justice or qualified Satisfaction.'

This is to say that the defenders of the Evangelical position conceived the sovereignty of God as conditioning His fatherly character, since they believed that the justice of God must be satisfied--by the sinner himself or a substitute--before the love of God can be expressed in forgiveness. This hybrid Puritan-Evangelical theology was further modified by the emphasis of Erskine and Campbell on the personal and gracious nature of God as conditioning and regulating (so to say) His Will; and by the stress of Maurice and Robertson on the Person rather than the work of Christ, the Person determining the nature of the work.

In this theological atmosphere Fairbairn spent his early years, and the burden of his strictly theological work was concerned with strengthening this modifying trend. That is, he interpreted the work of Christ through the Person, and the Will of God through His nature as revealed by Christ: the Sovereignty and Paternity he conceived as correlates, and his aim was never to let the Paternity be made subsidiary to the Sovereignty in his theological construction. The heart of his theology thus found expression in what he called the Sovereign Paternity of God.

i. The Doctrine of God.

As we have seen, Fairbairn purposed to construct his theology about twin principles, the formal and material, the former being the consciousness of Christ, the latter the Fatherhood of God. Actually he sought to reconcile two trends of thought in his theology: the first was the Calvinist bias with its notion of the Sovereignty of God which apparently he carried away from his early conditioning in Scottish Presbyterianism; the other was the growing tendency during the nineteenth century to emphasize what have been

called the humanitarian attributes in God, His benevolence and graciousness and mercy. Hence the Paternal Sovereignty[1] really became the determinative principle in his conception of God.

The New Testament interpretation of God through Christ, in Fairbairn's understanding of it, was an interpretation of Fatherhood in terms of Sonship. That is to say, our Lord (according to this view) thought of Father and Son in the Godhead as 'having a common being and as sustaining common relations to man',[2] and yet as being distinct in their 'mutual relations'. Fatherhood and Sonship thus are correlates: the being of both is necessary to the being of either. Both must essentially be in the nature of God, if our Lord's awareness of His own unique Sonship was true. The Apostolic writers, in developing their conception of God as revealed in Christ, tried to hold together the idea of God as being both Father and Son, a unity in which distinction was not lost; and out of this pristine interpretation of the early Church developed the idea of the Godhead, which Fairbairn considered a conception essential to a true interpretation of the God who is 'God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ'.

Fairbairn developed the concept of the social Trinity. Since God in essence is Love, in nature He must be social, for love must have an object on which to bestow itself. Similarly God as Reason must have an object that there may be activity of thought, that reason may be articulative. Both love and its object, and reason and its object, must be in the nature of God and not products of His Will. For if they were not in the nature of God, they must have been created and hence could not have existed eternally, in which instance God could not be considered eternally perfect. Fairbairn noted that ancient philosophy had entertained the idea of a Logos abiding in God and a

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1. It is interesting to note that one of Fairbairn's former students, Principal A. E. Garvie, uses this same idea, but expresses it with the more mellifluous phrase, 'the fatherly rule of God'.
2. Place of Christ, p. 393.

Logos ever going forth from Him. But the 'translation of the idea of an articulative Thought and an articulated Reason into the notion of the Father and Son' in Christian thought (a translation originating in Apostolic intuition which was inspired by our Lord) was the transformation of an abstraction into a living reality,—the concrete Godhead 'which is no simplicity, but a unity where love and thought are ever in exercise, and all the graces or beatitudes of social existence are things of the Divine essence, necessary to the nature of God'.[1]

Fairbairn maintained that the doctrine of the Trinity is essentially Christian, since suggested parallels in Hindu systems of thought arose out of polytheism tending toward pantheism, the so-called Trinity in these systems being radically different from the Christian Godhead, where God is conceived as personal, conscious and ethical. Parallels in Greek thought, moreover, Fairbairn considered to be philosophical, not religious.

The chief emphasis in Fairbairn's constructive theology was always placed on the Father-Son relationship within the Godhead, and Principal Garvie has suggested that Fairbairn's argument led him to a duality rather than a trinity.[2] But actually Fairbairn developed a doctrine of the Holy Spirit (not in detail, to be sure) in which he construed the Spirit as a Person in the Godhead, co-essential with the Father and Son. Fairbairn pointed out that the important place given to the Holy Spirit in the New Testament is manifest.

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1. Place of Christ, pp. 394-5.
2. "The Theology of Dr. Andrew Martin Fairbairn", op. cit., p. 38.
   Dr. K. E. Kirk points out that such a tendency toward 'binitarianism' was marked in the early Church, and that Trinitarianism had to 'fight its way and make good its footing against a strong tendency, both within and without the Church, towards belief in a Godhead of two persons only'. This is written to refute the idea that Christianity merely assimilated the Trinitarian idea from contemporary paganism. ("The Evolution of the Doctrine of the Trinity" in the symposium ed. by Rawlinson, The Trinity and the Incarnation, p. 162.)
   As a matter of fact Fairbairn referred to this very trend, showing how confusion regarding the Person and work of the Holy Spirit obtained in the Church until the fourth century, when the doctrine began to be fixed in its orthodox form.

> 'His work was as great and as necessary, and expressed attributes as divine, as those of the Father and Son--ubiquity, holiness, truth, infinite energy ever exercised and ever resultful.' (1)

Even though Patristic thought failed at first to realize the full significance of the idea of the Holy Spirit, that meaning could not be evaded in the development of Christian thought; and so the creedal formulation of the Church finally expressed the Christian belief in

> 'the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father, and who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified.' (2)

The Holy Spirit, then, as Fairbairn conceived Him, is God immanent in man as 'personal energy', whose creative action is essential not only for revelation and the renewal of the Church but to man's realizing his sonship to God. In short, Fairbairn stated and held as true (at least so far as can be judged from his writings) the orthodox conception of the Holy Spirit, even though he probably did not give it the place it should have held in his system, especially in view of his emphatic Congregationalism, in which of course the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is of vital and central importance.

It was Fairbairn's contention that the Christian doctrine of the Godhead had 'ethicized' the idea of God inherited from the Hebrew and Greek tradition and hence the theism of natural theology. For he considered that the Hebrew idea of God was conceived primarily not in ethical but in legalistic terms. Even St. Paul did not wholly escape his Judaic heritage, for in Fairbairn's view he argued at times more like a Jew than a Christian Apostle, as for instance in Romans when he speaks of God as potter and man as clay,--conceiving God not in terms of His nature but of His Will (ix. 19-24). As the Jewish idea of God was more legal and political than moral, so (Fairbairn asserted) the Greek was more metaphysical and abstract: in striking contrast to both came the personal and moral idea of the Godhead, as conceived by the

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1. Place of Christ, p. 490.
2. Nicaeno-Const. Symbol., quoted in Ibid.

Apostles and generated by the creative life of our Lord,--personal and moral because Fatherhood and Sonship were conceived as of the very essence of the Godhead's being.

> 'The relations that belonged to the very constitution by virtue of which He was God, (Fairbairn wrote), involved moral character, duties, ends. We shall utterly misconceive the Apostolic mind if we reduce the terms Father and Son and Spirit into rigid ontological symbols; the realities they denote are ethical. . . . ' (1)

As Fairbairn traced the development of this central notion of Christianity, he maintained that it had been perverted when it came under the influence of the Roman legalism, which caused the development of the Catholic institutional or political system of theology; and likewise under the masterful sway of the dialectic or constructive Calvinism, with its voluntaristic interpretation of God in terms of will, rather than in terms of His nature as Father. During the eighteenth century a reaction set in against such a forensic conception of Deity, and towards the close of the century the general democratic movement further stimulated this reaction. That is to say, as the rights of man were asserted against the sovereign and autocratic will of earthly monarchs, so these rights were asserted before God. This general theological movement against the over-emphasis on the Divine Sovereignty found expression during the nineteenth century in a marked stress on the Fatherhood and love of God, this trend having been stimulated by the historical movement which tried to return to the original Christian sources and recapture the spirit of the early Church. This emphasis in turn often resulted in a sentimentalizing tendency, whereby God was conceived merely as a benovolent and indulgent Father. Because of this maudlin trend there sprang up through the century recrudescences of the emphasis on the Sovereignty of God, an emphasis which in some parts of Britain (it should be noted) had continued unmodified throughout the entire era.

Fairbairn, as we have observed, attempted to bring together the

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1. Place of Christ, p. 406.

two ideas of Fatherhood and Sovereignty, the determinative notion with him having been the Fatherhood.

> 'We must not construe God (he contended) from our forensic sovereignty, but the sovereignty through God and God through the filial and normative consciousness of Jesus Christ.' 'Many people, indeed, speak of the will of God as if it could do harsh things without being cruel, unequal things without being unjust, and have ascribed things to Him that they would have held themselves accursed had they even schemed to do. But where Absolute Sovereignty is so conceived as to be an offence to the human conscience, it is not conceived as Divine. . . The basis of all faith in the ways of God is belief in His goodness.' (1)

Thus he would have replied to Zwingli's remark, 'We call God Father, because he can do what he pleases with us'[2]: we call God Father, because our Lord revealed Fatherhood to be an essential part of His nature; and He cannot do what He pleases with us, because what He does is determined by His nature.

Fairbairn differentiated, to be sure, between what he called the older and newer Calvinism: the older, he said, was filled with the majesty of God, the newer was but a hard and brittle legalism. But whether 'old' or 'new', he took his stand against the voluntarism in this Calvinist trend, because in it he saw the moral and personal attributes of God sacrificed. But he was equally against the sentimentalism which so often arose out of stressing the love of God; and he had been soundly enough indoctrinated in his youth with the stern and rigorous moral undergirding in the Calvinist interpretation of God that he could not easily give up the notion of Sovereignty in Deity.

The idea of Sovereignty, as expressed in the Calvinism still current in Fairbairn's day, interpreted God primarily as Creator and Governor, and Christ as the only Son by nature; the only other sons of God were the elect, who became sons through adoption. It was particularly against this restricted view of the Fatherhood of God that Fairbairn contended. He conceived God as the Father of all men, and further thought that all men were sons of the

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1. Place of Christ, p. 440; Sermons, pp. 197-8.
2. Quoted in McGiffert, op. cit., p. 243.

Father, not by adoption but by nature,—and that because Christ had guaranteed it (so to say) by assuming human nature in its fullness.

The two ideas of God's Paternity and Sovereignty, in Fairbairn's view, must be held together. The government of the universe should not be conceived in terms of autocratic monarchy, where the sovereign creates the law, but in terms of the primitive state where the natural sovereign was the father. The whole idea of sovereignty arose from the patriarchal society where one person was both sovereign and father. Hence Fairbairn argued that the government of the universe should be conceived in terms of the family, in which to be sure the father has absolute authority; but it is the authority, if not perverted, which has its grounding in the fatherly nature, and not in his will.

> 'The two, Fatherhood and Sovereignty, must then live together, and be incorporated into a living and effective unity, if we are to have a government of ideal perfection, such as becomes God and is suitable to a universe full of the realities and infinite possibilities of good and evil.' (1)

Since the universe should be conceived in this way, Fairbairn maintained that the violation of moral law was not so much punished as chastised by the Paternal Sovereign. That is, such violation was not punished merely to uphold the dignity and majesty of the ruler; rather was it chastised in order to discipline and educate, much as one might chastise the child in the family or the citizen in the state. Naturally Fairbairn argued that offences were not to be overlooked as being inconsequential by either the fatherly or the sovereign aspects of the Divine nature. Both (so to speak) must deal with the offender. But the autocratic sovereign thinks only of vindicating his own imperial position, whereas the father is concerned to redeem the child.

Fairbairn thus held that the absolute Sovereignty of God must be strongly affirmed, but that sovereignty must not be interpreted through the civil court or from the ideas of autocracies and monarchies. It should be

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1. Place of Christ, p. 436.

interpreted only in terms of the Fatherhood of God, as revealed by Christ. In other words God must be conceived not as arbitrary will but as a Being whose attributes are personal and moral. Thus since God is omnipotent, He has the power to will anything that is consistent with His fatherly nature: but the action of His will is always conditioned by that nature. This idea is expressed time and again in Fairbairn's writings, as for instance in his sermons.[1]

> God 'can never be false to Himself. . . He acts in a way worthy of Himself.' 'There is, in a sense, a law that binds the very will and throne of God; there is a sense in which even in the supreme act of His grace God followed law—the law of His own eternal sovereign paternity.'

His exposition of the Fatherhood and Sovereignty of God naturally led Fairbairn into considering the problem of how God can be both Justice and Love. He held that even as the Fatherhood and Sovereignty are correlates conditioning each other (the Fatherhood, however, being the more determinative), so justice and love in God are correlative. Love which is not righteous becomes sentimental and hence ceases to be love. Justice which is not essentially determined by love becomes so rigid in its judgments that it can no longer be considered justice. As Fairbairn himself expressed the idea: 'Love regards an object whose good it desires: righteousness is the conduct which fulfils the desire of love.'[2] For either justice or love to exist they must exist together, and Fairbairn held that only in God do they so exist. Thus in God alone do we find the moral perfection termed Holiness, a state where nature and act or character and will exist in absolute agreement.

Fairbairn's formulation of the Christian doctrine of the Godhead was regulative for his exposition of the attributes of God. Of these he gave particular consideration to the doctrines of God as Creator and Providence, since he considered that these doctrines gave the most difficulty to theism, and since the scientific thought of his day denied (directly or by implication)

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1. Sermons, pp. 84, 90, 52.
2. Place of Christ, p. 441.

both doctrines with their notions of a self-originating and self-sustaining universe. The difficulty of conceiving the creation at the least is mitigated, Fairbairn maintained, when the Godhead is thought of as social by nature, the persons being related by essence and hence through eternity, and since related, ever active. 'Creation was for God not the beginning of action; he was by essence active because a Godhead.'[1]

But what is this activity in the Godhead? In Fairbairn's view it was the activity of love, as we have seen, since God is the 'eternal activity of love'.[2] Because the Father is eternal love, creation, even while increasing the 'objects' of His love, does not increase the amount (so to speak), since that is infinite and immeasurable, able to bestow itself boundlessly without diminishing the supply.

The Godhead, then, retains its unchangeableness even while ever active. Yet while unchangeable, Fairbairn pointed out a want in God because of His very nature, which is Love. Since love is satisfied only when giving itself, God must have been in a sense unsatisfied until receptive beings had been created as objects of His love. In developing his argument in this connection, Fairbairn followed Lotze and Rothe. He quoted Lotze as follows, 'It is the living love which wills the happiness of others.'[3] But if God wills the happiness of others, Fairbairn argued that He must also will the life on which happiness is to be bestowed. 'And so He wills to create, that the happiness He has willed may be realized.'[4] In this way Fairbairn held that God is determined, while not physically necessitated, to be Creator,

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1. Place of Christ, p. 409.
2. Ibid, p. 410. In an address delivered in 1883, Fairbairn also spoke of the creation of man in this way: 'Men became that the subjective happiness of the Infinite might become objective.' (Studies, p. 94.) This extreme Hegelianism, where the idea of love is wholly metaphysical, was usually modified by his stress on the ethical nature of love, which (he said) must be ethical to be love at all.
3. Mikrokosmus, vol. III, p. 608, quoted in Place of Christ, p. 411.
4. Place of Christ, p. 411.

--determined by the moral perfection of His nature,--the libertas major of a Being whose action and essence are one.

God cannot be conceived as having created the world and then left it to fend for itself, and Fairbairn vigorously defended the orthodox Christian position that God is both transcendent as Creator and immanent in the world as Providence.[1] Creation, in fact, cannot be considered a finished act but rather a continuous process; and Providence is thus continuous creation. Fairbairn maintained that both the Deist and Pantheist views expressed only partial truths. God is transcendent, as the Deist declared, since He was before and is above nature. Similarly with the Pantheist Fairbairn insisted that God is immanent in nature; and without His Presence everywhere in nature it could have no being and would be at best only mechanical. If God were not immanent,--if He had wholly cut Himself off from His creation,--He could not be conceived as either omnipotent or omnipresent on the one hand, and thus He would be limited; and on the other, He could not be considered moral, since refusing all intercourse with the beings whose creation was determined by His nature.

Nature itself Fairbairn conceived as being wholly instrumental, an arena in which man is to build character, having only a relative reality for God, since it is basically but 'a middle term between minds',[2] --the minds of God and man. This was but another way for Fairbairn to explicate the idea of transcendence and immanence: for the maker of an instrument must be prior and transcendent to it, yet the maker's mind must also be present and active in it if it is to function.[3]

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1. 'The old Hebrew psalmist, by placing in striking contrast the infinitely great and the infinitely little, brings out, in the most effective way possible, the providence of God as at once comprehensive enough to superintend the interests of the collective universe, and kindly and careful enough not to neglect the smallest individual.' (Sermons, p. 207.)
2. Place of Christ, p. 420.
3. Cp. supra, Ch. II, pp. 60 ff.

In this way Fairbairn contended against the basic idea of Spinoza, that God can be thought of simply as substance, or of Schopenhauer, that He can be conceived as unconscious will. Nor did he follow to its radical outcome the evolutionary idea of conceiving Ultimate Reality merely as an immanent life force, a notion which was becoming increasingly prevalent in Fairbairn's day and which has found more recently its most articulate expression in Bergson. Fairbairn himself steadily maintained that God must be conceived 'as a Subject, i. e., as a conscious centre of thought and volition'.[1] As Subject, God is unchangeable in character, though often He will seem different as He presents various aspects of His character to meet different needs in an individual.

Fairbairn's doctrine of God, then, was constructed about the central conviction of the Divine Fatherhood as revealed in the consciousness of Christ, the Divine Sovereignty being correlative and yet subsidiary. This is but to say that God must be conceived as determined by His nature. Since His nature is love, best characterized by the Father-Son relation held together in unity within Himself, He is Creator: for love can be satisfied only when bestowing itself. But creation is not so much a single act as a continuous process, and God is ever active in His creation as Providence. He is, moreover, not active merely as impersonal energy; He is present as the Holy Spirit (whose activity is especially evident in revelation and within the Church), who represents God within man, so to say, as personal energy. Even though active in creation and immanent in man and nature, God is unchangeable because His character remains ever the same, His moral perfection even while able to express itself in an infinite number of ways ever expressing the same holiness. In his holiness God is infinitely majestic, high above man and his ways; and Fairbairn always stressed that God cannot be conceived as standing 'but a few degrees above man . . . without bringing Him in some respects several degrees below'.[2] Yet He is

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1. Philosophy, p. 154.

2. Ibid, p. 481.

not 'wholly Other', since man is created in His image and has knowledge of Him. God is personal (though in a sense far beyond what is meant when man is termed personal), since such attributes as love and justice and fatherhood have no meaning when considered as hypostasizations, have reality only when incarnated in a person. Finally God is passible,--and this attribute has particular significance when viewed in relation to the Atonement,--since He is 'tender, compassionate; then all sorrow, all pain, and all anguish are to Him painful, the cause of deepest pity and regret'.[1]

An eloquent passage[2] from the City of God epitomizes Fairbairn's doctrine of God.

> 'Into this world, with its chaotic thought of God, yet its equal necessity for Him, Christ came. He came and declared that the First Cause, the Final End of the world, viewed in relation to man, is an Eternal Spirit which can be represented by no name but the name of "Father". The Father must be in an equal degree Love and Righteousness, as Love seeking the good of His children, as Righteousness seeking their good through an eternal law of truth and right. Love is eternal, had no beginning, can have no end in God. Love, too, is social, can exist only as there is the subject and the object of love. Love made God happy; love craved to create happiness; wished, as the ever-blessed God was blessed in Himself, to fill the silent places of the universe with glad voices, with happy souls. Man is not a necessity to God, but God needed man, needed man to satisfy His infinite love, the large and eternal emotion, of His own great spirit; and as God needed man, man rose obedient to God's need. But the need was not simply creative, it was redemptive as well. Love must aim at the good of the child it caused, and labour for it; as the individual rises out of love, love ever continues to work his good, to seek his weal. Ill to a child is ill to a parent; sin in man is suffering in God. Out of man's ill came God's suffering, revealed, realized, made to the universe for ever apparent in the Person, in the sacrifice of Christ.'

ii. The Doctrine of Sin.

One of Fairbairn's most basic convictions was that man is created in the image of God. Because so created, he is son of God,--and that not merely by adoption, but by nature. On this point Fairbairn again differed from the strain of voluntaristic Calvinism which persisted in theological thought; for

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1. Religion in History, p. 92.
2. p. 267.

according to this Calvinist view, man could be son of God only by adoption, and only the elect could be adopted. Fairbairn contended vigorously against this notion, not only maintaining that to be son by adoption is not to be son at all (since to be really son one must be so by nature), but also insisting that all men are sons of God by nature.[1] The bond between God and man is not merely physical, based on creation, but essentially moral, the very purpose of God in creating man having been to fashion beings in His own likeness who could be recipients of His love. Sonship, then, is real to begin with, adoption for Fairbairn meaning the redemption of man from the sonship of nature into the sonship of grace.

Since God is by nature Father and man by nature son, Fairbairn maintained that the normal relation between them is one of communal fellowship. Only from this point of view can the concept of sin[2] have any meaning, since Fairbairn held that sin is the act or disposition which interferes with or makes impossible this relation of intimate fellowship between God and man. Sin is thus a religious idea. As such it is distinguished from the philosophical concept of evil, though similarly involving suffering and loss; from the ethical concept of vice, though similarly involving disobedience and blame; from the legal concept of crime, though similarly involving revolt and wrong, culpability and penalty. When man therefore sins (if such sin is viewed from 'within' religion), he is not being what he was created to be, and is himself responsible

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1. Because man carries within himself the Imago Dei, Fairbairn stressed that the evolutionary principle—the survival of the fittest in the struggle for existence—is not adequate to guide human life. however much it may obtain in the animal world. Because man as immortal spirit bears the image of his Creator, he has value as a person in God's sight. He cannot be considered merely as a unit who must be victorious in the competitive struggle of society, or be carelessly thrown aside as useless. Fairbairn asserted that in the Christian view of man, man as son of God is as 'immortal as his Parent; time no scene of selfish struggle, but an arena which disciplines for eternity. The men who live by faith do not feel as if their lives were moments in the being of the eternal silence, but rather fore-gleams of the eternal day'. (Sermons, p. 106.)
2. For Fairbairn's further treatment of the problem of evil, physical and moral, cp. supra, chapter II, pp. 78 ff.

for his failure.[1] In a sense sin is usurpation, since man when he sins allows his own will, by nature evil, to usurp the place which should be held by the holy Will of God. As Fairbairn wrote: 'We make ourselves into our god, and attempt to force Him and all He has created into servants to our wills, means to our ends.'[2]

God permits while not condoning sin: for it is not possible for Him, having created man free, to suspend the will inclined to sin by destroying the freedom of that will. As we have already seen, this view is determinative for Fairbairn's entire approach to the problem of evil and sin in the world. That is to say, he conceived God as creating beings capable of sinning, because only so could he create beings capable of obeying, and hence sons rather than automatons. According to this view, God as Love created man to give him beatitude, but that beatitude had to be earned (so to say) through man's striving, by the grace of God, to achieve character within the arena of the world. The goal of God for man is character or moral perfection. That goal 'may be attained, but cannot be created; God can make a being capable of moral action, but not a being with all the fruits of moral action garnered within him'.[3]

Original sin, as Fairbairn conceived it, is that collective evil which as part of man's inheritance acts in the individual prior to the operation of the will. Original sin has 'spoiled' human nature. That is to say, Fairbairn pointed out that the nature which acts as well as the acts themselves must be taken into account in a moral judgment: and by that judgment human

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1. Fairbairn does not develop the doctrine of the Fall, refers to it several times only casually. One of his explicit references to it is the following: 'Since man is His (i. e., God's) breath, he is His kin, with a dependent being, yet with an independence of will which fits him to hold fellowship with God who made him. This dignity, which he can keep only by obedience, he receives but to lose; for on the very morrow of the creation, which, as it left God's hand, was so good, evil enters because man, who has been made so much greater than he knew, was by his very innocence and inexperience so open to its enticements.' (Philosophy, pp. 246-7.) Here, it would seem, Fairbairn makes ignorance the root cause of sin.
2. Place of Christ, p. 453.
3. Ibid, p. 457.

nature is found to be evil. Yet Fairbairn tended to suggest that it is potentially evil or is inclined to sin, rather than that it is really evil. Thus although he held that original sin underlies and precedes all individual sin, he also maintained that it does not involve culpability and guilt, which comes only from actual sin. In other words, man is not really responsible for the nature he inherits,[1] only for the sinful acts he commits. The whole doctrine of original sin for Fairbairn naturally is tied up with the interdependence and interconnection of all mankind: mankind is a family or organism, and the sin or good of one is evil or gain for all: thus collective righteousness is correlative with collective sin,--a notion which is closely related to the social emphasis of the nineteenth century.

It was Fairbairn's contention that Christianity had really created the consciousness of sin. In the light of the moral purity of our Lord man first became poignantly aware of the heinousness of sin.[2] But Fairbairn pointed out that Christianity, while making man vividly conscious of his sinful nature, also provided the means, as it were, whereby he might be redeemed. For in

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1. Fairbairn does not raise the question, who then is responsible? His position in this regard stands at odds with his stress on man's free will. As Canon Hodgson points out: 'What is really at stake is the existence of human freedom at all, for to identify the two (i. e., original sin and temptation to sin) must end in looking on human actions as caused by something other than the man himself, something for which he is not responsible. If a man's actions are caused by temptations over which he has no control, if they are not the expression of his character, they are not his actions at all, nor have they any moral quality.' (Essays in Christian Philosophy, p. 94.)
2. The trend toward monism in the nineteenth century tended to close the orthodox chasm between good and evil. Fairbairn, too, was not unaffected by this trend, which of course became more marked wherever Hegelianism dominated thought. Although Fairbairn did not fail to stress the unrelieved badness of evil, it was also possible for him to speak at times of the 'accident of sin' (Philosophy, p. 483; Place of Christ, p. 477), or again of sin being 'more a misfortune than a crime' (Philosophy, p. 547). The use of such phrases would tend to show that he completely ignored the idea of Divine over-ruling. In this connection it is of interest to note that he criticised Pusey's sense of sin (described in Liddon's Life) as 'more sensuous than spiritual' and as 'morbid' (Philosophy, pp. 332-4). Note also Forsyth's remark in an 'obituary' notice on Fairbairn: Hegelianism 'always comes to grief on the sunk rock of human sin'. (op. cit., p. 2.) On the whole, when he is not dealing specifically with the problem of evil or the concept of original sin, Fairbairn is prone (concluded on next page)

Fairbairn's world-view, redemption is indissolubly linked with creation: that is, he held that the love which creates cannot but seek to redeem its creatures from sin.

In considering God's relation to sin, the Fatherhood and Sovereignty again must be held together. As Righteousness, God will not tolerate sin or allow it to have any place in his universe; as Father, he keeps on loving man even after he has sinned, so that he must ever keep on seeking to save him. Fairbairn held that for God as Sovereign to annihilate sin would be tantamount to destroying man's freedom of choice, and that would be equivalent to annihilating the sinner. This in turn would be but God's acknowledgment that He knew no way of mending, except by ending, His creation. He further argued that God as Father, to be true to His own nature, must become Saviour. Thus the Incarnation was determined by the very nature of things, and the Cross as the means of redemption exists eternally within the Creator heart of God.

In this connection Fairbairn touches on the 'view of sin as taken up into a larger purpose of grace which seems to some . . . to lie at the heart of Christianity, and which finds classical expression in the Holy Saturday hymn O felix culpa'.[1] Thus he suggests that creation is only in the process of being made, and sin occurs in the 'first act of the drama': its real or whole significance can be understood only when the last act is complete. We do know that through sin 'attributes of God have become known that could not otherwise have been manifested, and the beatific vision will be all the richer and the more ecstatic that the Father it sees is one who loved too deeply to surrender the lost'.[2] This idea of Divine over-ruling, however, is not developed by Fairbairn and has no important place in his constructive theology.

(continued from previous page)
to allow (if not, indeed, to stress) that man is inherently good rather than radically evil. This tendency is quite in accord with the moral optimism of the century, and with the general bent of the era toward absolute idealism.

1. Webb, Review of Philosophy, op. cit., p. 297. Professor Webb criticises Fairbairn for completely ignoring this view in his Philosophy.
2. Place of Christ, p. 457.

iii. The Incarnation.

Fairbairn realized how closely the doctrine of the Incarnation (which he called the centre of gravity in positive theology during the nineteenth century) is related to that of Creation. For in creation God limited Himself by giving to man at least a relative degree of free-will. Could He not further limit Himself by manifesting Himself in history at a particular moment of the time series? In this connection Fairbairn wrote:[1]

> 'There is no problem raised by the idea of God manifest in the flesh as to the relation of the divine nature to the human unity of one person, or as to the historical origin of such a relation, i. e., its beginning in time; or as to the action of the limited manhood on the illimitable Godhood, which is not equally raised by the inter-relations of God and nature.'

In construing the doctrine of the Incarnation Fairbairn again used his determinative principle of the Fatherhood and Sonship in the nature of the Godhead. Since he held that man is son of God by nature, he emphasized the affinity between the Divine and human natures, the differences between them being only in degree. Yet he maintained that the affinity is ideal, rather than actually manifested in man or realized in history. In reality man through sin has become estranged from God: the affinity between the Divine and human natures has been obfuscated: man though created in the imago Dei has 'gone bad', so to say. But if the purpose of God in creation is not to be frustrated, He will seek to redeem man,—and that (Fairbairn argued) by the very 'ethical necessities of His nature, . . . the gentle constraint of love and the imperious demand of righteousness'.[2] Hence God seeks continuously to win man back to Himself. He cannot coerce, since coercion is contrary to His nature and since it would involve destroying man's free-will, which (as Fairbairn expressed it) was tantamount to killing the patient to cure the disease. The only way man could be won was through a man. Philosophically expressed, the Universal had

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1. Philosophy, p. 479.
2. Place of Christ, p. 469.

to become the Particular, since man can know the Universal only through the particular instance. The ideal had to become the real.[1] So God manifested Himself as man because only so could the ideal Father-Son relationship between God and man become actual.

> 'Sonship can be realized only where Fatherhood is known, and Fatherhood can be known only where it is seen with all its qualities in fullest exercise . . . If God's Fatherhood is to be a reality to man, he must see it as it is, know it by experience, by handling it and being handled by it. But the only way in which it can thus come to him is in the form of humanity. He must see a real son, whose knowledge of the Father is inner, and not, like his own, outer only. He must learn what the Father is from one who has lived in His bosom.' (2)

And Fairbairn concluded that only through the God-man could this end be achieved, by the second Person of the Trinity becoming incarnate. Fairbairn maintained that the actual act of Incarnation could best be explained by the kenotic theory.[3]

Fairbairn's approach to the difficult question of thetwo natures was little different from the Patristic treatment of the problem. This is but to say that his approach was metaphysical rather than psychological. His general thought was that two substances, divinity and humanity, were so brought together as to form the God-man. Thus a perfect manhood expressed in time the perfection of the Godhead, 'the inner qualities, the hidden loves and energies which were . . . the God of God'.[4]

In Fairbairn's judgment, then, there were no basic obstacles to the thought of the eternal Logos, which he conceived as 'going out' continuously from

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1. One of his former students, who probably has followed Fairbairn's approach to religion more closely than any other, has lucidly expressed this point. 'It was to give to the Individual and the Contingent the weight and value of the Universal and Abiding, and to give to the Universal and Abiding the power of the Individual and the Contingent over the human spirit. It is the triumphant solution of this problem in the Person of Jesus, that constitutes the originality and special genius of Christianity.' (Franks, The Atonement, p. 140.)
2. Place of Christ, pp. 474-5.
3. At this point Fairbairn's exposition is left hanging in the air, so to speak. He did not explain what he meant by reference to this theory, nor did he connect it with the rest of his exposition. As a matter of fact, his whole treatment of the doctrine of the Incarnation may not unfairly be called cursory. If, as he said, the Incarnation was the centre of gravity for theology during the Victorian years, it can further be added that he did not so consider it in his own system.
4. Place of Christ, p. 479.

the Godhead, assuming a full humanity. Such an interpretation of the Person of Christ he further maintained had been vindicated by what He had done in history. That is, he contended that the pragmatic test showed that the 'effect' of His action in history could best be explained by accepting the Apostolic interpretation of their Lord, namely, that He is the Incarnate Son of God.

> 'We must look at the centuries that have come after Him, and His action in these centuries, if we would know either whom or what He is.' 'We may, therefore, infer that, as the Person who has been most efficient in the creation of order, Jesus Christ is the most ordered Person in history; that as He who has done most to create progress, He most expresses the will that works in all for all. By causing God to be realized in history He is proved to be God manifest in the flesh.' (1)

iv. The Atonement.

Fairbairn's general approach to the redeeming work of Christ was that usually linked with the name of Abelard. What this Abelardian theory of the Atonement means is succinctly epitomized by Principal Franks.

> 'It is the doctrine that Christ reconciles man to God by revealing the love of God in His life and still more in His death, so bringing them to trust and love Him in return.' (2)

Though in general the avowed intention of Fairbairn is definitely to interpret Christian theology from this point of view, actually his exposition is often strongly coloured by legalistic terminology and ideas.

As we have seen, Fairbairn considered that all Christian doctrines took their rise from and should be grouped around the Sovereign Paternity of God. The ideas of Fatherhood and Sovereignty must be held together within a unity, and Fairbairn thought that much of the difficulty in correctly interpreting the work of Christ had come through conceiving the righteousness of God as a sort of independent entity (e. g., his friend Dale's notion of the 'eternal Law of righteousness') instead of realizing that the absolute righteousness or justice of God could be understood only as construed through

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1. Sermons, pp. 6, 8.
2. The Atonement, p. 2.

His Fatherhood.

Viewed in this light, then, Fairbairn considered that the work of Christ was two-fold: (1) He showed to man what the Eternal Father is really like; (2) He made man poignantly conscious of the awfulness of sin. In his last book Fairbairn expressed the idea in simile.[1]

> 'The still pool or the solitary tarn may, as it looks into the silent face of heaven, reflect either the innumerable stars, or the radiant sunshine, or the passive moonlight; and so the Crucifixion is like a glass in which we may see standing together, for contrast and comparison, two infinities, the winsome grace of God and the hideous Evil of man, especially in the undisguise it wears when it feels conscious of victory.'

Fairbairn thus maintained that the Atonement is the creation of grace and does not in itself create grace. Its saving power is not arbitrary in its effect, nor is it efficacious for some men and not for others. That is to say, its saving power is not restricted, as Calvinists in the nineteenth century thought, to the elect. Fairbairn insisted that it is efficacious for all men, even as God is Father to all. Yet the Atonement does not guarantee (so to say) the salvation of anyone, since to appropriate its saving power man must have faith. Thus salvation is made possible for all men, but actual for none.

It can be seen that Fairbairn held a modified universalism, and all his thought is undergirded by the three Morisonian universalities: 'that God loves all, that Christ died for all, and that the Holy Spirit strives in all'.[2] But salvation cannot be made compulsory for any man without violating the free-will without which, as Fairbairn steadily maintained, he would not be man. The only constraint consistent with His nature which God can use on His creatures is the constraint of love which gives itself without stint. Such love was supremely shown forth on the Cross, and man to be saved need but

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1. Studies, pp. 445-6.
2. Garvie, London Quat., op. cit., p. 28.

respond to it through faith. But Fairbairn further pointed out that it is conceivable that man may not so respond, even though this constraint of love be directed upon him, as it were, eternally: it is conceivable that he might forever refuse to respond to that love.[1] If he does not respond, there is no power in heaven or on earth which can compel him, and so in a sense he 'damns' himself. Yet God can never forget any of His children, even those who will not respond to His love, any more than a mother can forget the child who has died, even though overtly she seems to be directing all her love toward her living children. Fairbairn would have repudiated the idea set forth by Ivan in Dostoevsky's novel (as Ivan narrates an old legend) that certain sinners sink to the bottom of a burning lake in Hell so that they cannot swim out. 'And these God forgets.'[2] Fairbairn held that God could not forget: He could not erase from His memory (so to speak) the names of any of His children. Hence He would never withdraw His love from any of them. But since the sinner, by eternally refusing that love, might eternally carry on the process of rejecting salvation, God's purpose for all men in Fairbairn's view might be eternally thwarted because of the human free-will which God persistently refused to over-rule.

In the death of Christ, then, God passed judgment on sin, and in that way He vindicated His nature, whether viewed from the side of His Fatherhood or Sovereignty, his justice or love. A quotation will illustrate the point, and certain words I have italicised will indicate the legalistic colouring in Fairbairn's thought which was mentioned above.

> His judgments 'are *not merely* retributory or retaliatory, penal or vindicative, in the judicial sense, but they are corrective, reclamatory, disciplinary. *While they vindicate authority*, they are intended to be not simply deterrent and exemplary, but reformatory and

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1. Sin 'is in its nature so malignant that it may for ever divide God from the spirits He created that He might enjoy their society for ever.' (*Place of Christ*, p. 455.)
2. *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 260, Heinemann edition (1913).

> restorative. This affects the function of the Atonement; it works in the universe as the manifest and embodied judgment of God against sin, but of this judgment as chastening and regenerative rather than juridical and penal.' (1)

Similarly in another connection he wrote:

> 'We may be too fastidious to use the terms "vicarious" and "substitutionary", but it is easier to object to the terms than to escape the idea they express.' (2)

This tendency in Fairbairn was due to his making the same approach which Principal Franks has criticised in McLeod Campbell's and Moberly's statements of the doctrine of the Atonement, to wit, that 'these modern doctrines are still based on the notion of making sin forgivable, which abstracts from the personality of the sinner, and so misses the true problem which is to make the sinner forgivable'.[3] Fairbairn's notion of the death of Christ as a sacrifice, then, is tied up with his idea that the sacrifice was made for man as corporate personality, in the Old Testament sense. Without question Fairbairn expressed the idea that the sinless Christ offered Himself as a vicarious sacrifice for sinful, corporate mankind, the work of Christ in His death thus being considered essentially substitutionary in nature, and satisfying both the love and righteousness of God: the love because the sinner is made so conscious of the abysmal awfulness of his sin that he is shown, through Christ, the way of recovery and salvation, Christ also providing the 'moral dynamic' (as Fairbairn termed it) to effect the recovery; the righteousness, because sin has been judged in terms of the universal law of God, and so the authority of the Divine Will has been vindicated.[4] In this way Fairbairn clung to the Anselmic notions of recapitulation and satisfaction, modified, however, by the Protestant theology which utilized the idea of public instead of private law. Despite his

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1. Place of Christ, p. 482.
2. Philosophy, p. 500.
3. The Atonement, p. 184.
4. 'Salvation is freedom from penalty; . . . it is penalty escaped, it is not attainment won.. . . Salvation has regard to sin forgiven, penalty remitted, to the guilty proclaimed just and justified.' (Sermons, p. 50.)

assertion that the ways of God to man should be conceived in terms of the family, he used here the forensic figure of the law court. Thus, as he himself said, the death of Christ 'does not mean an expedient for quenching the wrath of God, or for buying off man from His vengeance'[1]: yet the penal as well as corrective work of God had to be done, penal by vindicating the authority of universal law, corrective by burning into the sinner the sense of the awfulness of sin and so making him turn away from that sin to the Divine love which is freely offered.

Fairbairn stressed the Marcan text, 'The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many' (x, 45) as being of central importance in understanding the nature of the saving work effected on the Cross. In this connection Fairbairn maintained that in speaking of His death as ransom, our Lord was thinking of the efficacy of His death as accomplishing the purpose of God. But he used the word not in the sense of buying man off from the world or the devil, nor of paying a debt to God or making satisfaction to law. The idea rather is that man is enslaved to sin, and by His death is rescued (ransomed) from that bondage. Here he followed specifically the Abelardian interpretation of the Atonement.

> 'The "minister" has to seek the person he would save, bear him in his own soul, quicken the dead energies of good within him by the streams of his own life, burn out the evil of the old manhood by the fire of consuming love. . . He is therefore the person whose function it is as the way to lead to the Father, as the truth to show the Father, as the life to generate, enlarge, and perpetuate on earth the Spirit which is of God.' (2)

In Fairbairn's view our Lord thought of His death in terms of sacrifice and ransom. But He also considered that His death stood alone, was unique: He conceived His Person most highly when foreseeing His death most clearly and identified Himself with all the righteousness of the time, even as He found within Himself the unified being (as it were) of all the good who

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1. Philosophy, p. 500.
2. Ibid, pp. 407, 409.

are hated of all the evil. Thus once again the theory of recapitulation is met in Fairbairn's exposition. Of more significance, however, is his emphasis on the uniqueness of the Cross because there is no parallel to it in other religions, and in this connection he contrasts particularly the Buddha and the Christ. Whereas the Buddha was pessimistic in his world-view, Christ in His passion and death was optimistic, showing a faith in the goodness of existence by obeying the Divine imperative to rescue it from sin. The Buddha was considered as a leader to be imitated: but what Christ did no other can do, since 'He offers Himself as a sacrifice that He may win eternal redemption for man'.[1] Again, the Buddha was ascetic: Christ is Redeemer in that His suffering is curative, since through it He restores human nature to personal and social health. Finally, the basis of the Buddha's salvation was a metaphysical nihilism: in the world which Christ redeems, however, where man in his own degree is as real as God and where God cannot cease being pure nor can man will himself out of existence, the death of Christ has a singular character in reconciling the guilty man to the pure and eternal God.[2]

It was pointed out earlier that Fairbairn considered the doctrine of the passibility of God essential in his interpretation of Christian theology. Especially in explicating the doctrine of the Atonement did he emphasise the Divine passibility. If he could assert that 'Patripassianism is only half a heresy', his general point of view would carry him much farther into maintaining that it is no heresy at all, but the deepest truth about the ways of God in relation to the universe. For the Incarnation, passion and death of our Lord revealed with pellucid clarity the nature of God and espcially, Fairbairn

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1. Philosophy, p. 483.
2. In view of the influence of Hinduism on nineteenth century British thought (expressed, for instance, in Schopenhauer and, it may be noted, expressed also in New England Transcendentalism, especially in Emerson) and the general neo-Hegelian trend, it is of significance that Fairbairn consistently stressed personality in God and in man,--particularly significant when we remember his own idealist bias and his own immersion (so to say) in Indian thought.

pointed out, God's attitude to sin. That attitude he described as one of 'hate' toward sin, 'the sorrow in the heart of His happiness. . . If He is capable of sorrow, He is capable of suffering; and were He without the capacity for either, He would be without any feeling of the evil of sin or the misery of man. The very truth that came by Jesus Christ may be said to be summed up in the passibility of God'.[1] God suffered, then, not as the Son (and here Fairbairn differed from Patripassianism), but in Himself, in the sacrifice He made by sending His Son into the world. Since it was to judge sin that the Son became incarnate, Fairbairn concluded that the purpose of the death of Christ was to reveal to man the suffering which sin cost the Father and in that way bring man to the sharp awareness of the heinousness of sin,

> 'an offence so awful in its guilt as to involve the passion of God and the death of His Son'. For 'we may . . . construe the sufferings and death of Christ as if they were the sacraments, or symbols and seals, of the invisible passion and sacrifice of the Godhead.' (2)

In Fairbairn's system of Christian theology the Cross held a central position: for our Lord in His death revealed most clearly His consciousness. And in the consciousness of our Lord was to be found, as we have noted, the material principle of Christian theology, namely, the Father-hood of God. The Fatherhood, however, must always be viewed in direct relation with its correlate, the Sovereignty. This double aspect of God's nature found its supreme expression in the Cross. The 'why' of the Cross is seen by looking at the nature of man. For man was created in God's image, and created to be in continuous fellowship with his Creator. But to be created man--a being capable of attaining character through moral action--involved giving him freedom of will: and man in the innocence of his freedom sinned,

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1. Place of Christ, p. 483.
2. Philosophy, p. 372; Place of Christ, p. 485. In a sermon he also suggested that the idea of suffering in God helps to mitigate the difficulty of understanding suffering in man. 'Trust in God even while He slays only expresses the faith that He is in slaying good, that He has gracious ends not otherwise attainable, attained so at His pain no less than ours, but so attained that our good and His glory may be together furthered and secured.' (Sermons, p.198)

and thus was estranged from God. God, to win man back into fellowship with Himself by the only method consistent with His fatherly nature, became incarnate in the Son. In order to redeem mankind, the second Person of the Godhead 'emptied' Himself, and was made man. As man he constantly taught the Fatherhood of God. But especially in His death He revealed the true fatherly nature of God, who is Infinite Love, and the actual sinful nature of man, who is potential love. By this revelation in His life but most especially on the Cross our Lord made possible for all men the salvation which is fellowship with the Eternal Father.

CHAPTER VI. FAIRBAIRN AS CHAMPION OF INDEPENDENT PROTESTANTISM.

A. DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH.

i. The Contemporary Ecclesiastical Situation.

Fairbairn's account of a personal experience during his travels will provide a setting into which to introduce an exposition of his ecclesiology. He tells of being in a Roman Catholic Cathedral in Italy and watching 'what was conceived to be an act of Christian worship . . . going on'. He recounts how a procession of priests marched round, carrying a cross on which hung a figure, presumably representing our Lord, together with various paraphernalia of torture. The crowd of priests chanted and genuflected in unison. His reaction Fairbairn described as follows:[1]

> 'I could not help saying, in what was not pride but utter humiliation of soul, "Your worship is not mine, nor is your God; and as for this cross you carry, it speaks rather of the wickedness of the men who slew the Saviour than of the grace of Him who saves man by His love".' 'There is nothing that fills me with darker horror or deeper aversion than the apotheosis of wounds and death which the Roman Church offers as its image of Christ.'

The illustration is cited not only to show Fairbairn's complete lack of sympathy with Catholicism: his reaction to this act of Roman worship really sets forth his whole thesis in regard to the Church. For him the Roman and Anglo-Catholic positions as contrasted with that of Independent Protestantism represent not merely different ecclesiastical systems, but different religions, different underlying philosophies, entirely different world-views.

The impassioned and reasoned criticism which Fairbairn levelled against Catholicism continuously throughout his active life in the Church must be viewed against the background of the historical situation in Britain during the Victorian era. The Tractarian movement had passed through its first flowering period and its first decline and was again becoming a potent power among the so-called 'younger' Anglo-Catholics when Fairbairn began his

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1. Philosophy, p. 556.

work in England.[1] The joining of a not inconsiderable group of Anglican clerics, led by Newman, with the Roman Church had given Roman Catholicism an entirely new position in England. Not only had its prestige been greatly enhanced, but for the first time in its history (as Fairbairn suggested) it became to any extent indigenous to England. The third factor to be taken into account is that the long struggle of Nonconformity to attain equal legal status with Anglicanism had finally resulted toward the close of the century in the removal of most disabilities from Dissenters. Under its new freedom Nonconformity rose to power during the last quarter of the century. Its strength was further increased by the fact that the group of capitalists directing the rapid spread of industrialism through the English midlands for the most part joined Nonconformist Churches. Because of this ascendent Independency, Fairbairn (with others) prophesied the end of the Establishment in England and proclaimed as the mission of Nonconformity the making of Free Church principles regnant throughout the land. In an address before the Congregational Union in 1885 Fairbairn said:[2]

> 'If we so interpret our mission, then we shall accomplish a work that will make it impossible for the sceptre that controls English destinies ever to pass into the hands of a disestablished sacerdotal church, and we shall help to keep it for ever in the hands of the risen and reigning Christ.'

After making allowance for the rhetoric of peroration, the quotation gives a definite indication of the abounding confidence with which Fairbairn defended the Independent position. On the basis of his purview of the Church situation in England in his day Fairbairn vigorously set forth what he called the 'new Puritanism' as opposed to the 'new sacerdotalism', and he contended that the latter is sensuous and places its emphasis on ecclesiasticism, whereas the former is spiritual and theological: 'the one magnifies the church, the other magnifies God'.[3]

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1. Cp. Ch. I, pp. 5 ff.
2. Studies, p. 141.
3. Ibid, p. 128.

The fundamental principle on which Fairbairn's entire ecclesiology was based was that Congregationalism was vastly more than a Nonconformist denomination. In his view the Congregational polity represented the form of Church organization which most closely corresponded to the New Testament idea of the Church and hence most fully expressed the mind of our Lord in regard to His society. It will be well to have before us the basic Congregational principles, as tersely stated[1] by Fairbairn's contemporary, R. W. Dale.

> 'The Congregational Church most clearly expresses the mind of Christ.
>
> 'The Congregational idea is permanently rooted in the central truths of the Christian revelation.
>
> 'The Congregational polity is at once the highest and most natural organization of the Christian Church.'

These principles Fairbairn steadily and consistently promulgated.

ii. The Church and the Kingdom of God.

'In its most general sense,' Fairbairn defined the Church, 'it may be described as the society He (i. e., Christ) instituted, and constituted out of those who through faith in Him were elect unto the life and fellowship of God.'[2] Our Lord spoke always in terms of the Kingdom, Fairbairn pointed out, at the most only twice in terms of the Church. Hence His emphasis was on the people who composed the Kingdom, who were members of His society; and He never thought in terms of organization. He had nothing at all to say about officials or sacramental acts in His society, nor did He make any sacerdotal claim for Himself. That is but to say that His primary thought was of persons, and their relation to one another and to the living God.

As Fairbairn interpreted the New Testament, our Lord's idea of the Kingdom was of a people of God who would live according to the principles which He Himself had enunciated in His teaching and demonstrated in His life.

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1. Quoted by Albert Peel in Christian Freedom, p. 24.
2. Place of Christ, p. 513.

These people were to live in accord with the law of love, which simply meant that they would act as sons of God because of their love for the Father, and that this transcendental love could not but be expressed in love to their fellows. In Fairbairn's words, 'Love to one's neighbor was but active and applied love of God.'[1] Hence the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man were correlative: and Fairbairn held that these twin ideas formed the rock, so to say, on which our Lord had planned that His Church was to be built.

The term ecclesia first became current in the thought of the Apostles, who conceived the local Church as the incorporation of Christ's idea for His society: that is, a local Church was conceived as a brotherhood of persons who through faith in Christ became a society of the redeemed. St. Paul's conception of the body of Christ, first applied to the local Church to suggest the unity of persons which composed it, came to be used also to refer to the illocal Church,—to the inter-relation and interdependence of the local units. Fairbairn emphasized, however, that each unit was to retain its autonomy, even while having this organic connection with the whole. In the later Epistles, St. Paul conceived Christ as the Head of the Church, thought of in universal and ideal terms, the emphasis so far as its members were concerned having fallen on their vocation, 'the called', who through embodying what Fairbairn called 'social virtues' were to establish the universal and ideal society.

Thus Fairbairn maintained that our Lord's idea of the Kingdom was realized in the Church of the Apostles. Furthermore, he held that only in the sense that the Church is the filial society can it be conceived as continuing the Incarnation, since the new humanity in the Church, embodying the 'ideal Sonship which Christ realized' may be considered as the 'continued incarnation of sonship'.[2]

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1. Philosophy, p. 524.
2. Place of Christ, p. 529.

This New Testament idea of the Church, which he held to be the basis for all construction in regard to the Church, Fairbairn epitomized as follows:[1]

> '(1) As regards material character the Church is the people, the society of the sons of God; and (2) as regards formal character the Church is described in theocratic, ethical, and social terms, but not in sacerdotal or ceremonial.'

iii. Church Polity.

In view of this interpretation of the New Testament Church, Fairbairn argued that the claims of neither Roman nor Anglo-Catholicism were valid, since both broke away from the primitive Christian conception by emphasizing the sacerdotal ministry and by maintaining that a particular ecclesiastical polity was in a direct line of development with the early Church. Catholic doctrine seemed to imply that the clergy and polity constituted the Church: but Fairbairn contended that actually the Church (in the New Testament interpretation of it) must constitute the clergy and polity.

No polity can claim to be divinely inspired, to have sprung full-blown (as it were) from the mind of Christ: thus Fairbairn's fundamental thesis. The principles of historical method must be applied to every Church polity: none can claim to be supernatural in origin. Historically viewed, then, Fairbairn maintained that the Roman polity had grown up to meet on a more equal footing the immense organized power which confronted it. Gradually as the Church gained strength and the Roman Empire became decadent, the Church vanquished the Empire. The converted Emperor had been Pontifex Maximus under the old regime, for religion and state, and continued thus under the new. Thus the polity of the Church became imperial because of the environment in which it lived, to the detriment (in the long run) of the Church. Fairbairn concluded: 'The name that distinguished the dynasty was the name of Christ: but the form under which its power or monarchy was constituted was the form

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1. Place of Christ, p. 535.

of Caesar.'[1] The organization of the Church developed in a sort of opportunistic way until the fifth and sixth centuries, when the polity was given a philosophical basis, largely under the influence (Fairbairn contended) of neo-Platonic thought as mediated by St. Augustine, Synesius, and especially the Pseudo-Dionysius.

Fairbairn granted that the imperial form of polity may have been what was needed during the centuries when the Roman Church created and maintained order throughout the world. But as the Church under its monarchical system itself became corrupt, it became manifest that it was not adequate to mediate the Christian religion. In Christianity the idea of God as revealed by Christ was the determinative idea of the religion. When the institution became determinative, Fairbairn asserted that 'the centre of gravity is, as it were, changed; the church experiences a kind of apotheosis, God suffers a sort of political incarnation'.[2] The Reformers attempted to change the centre of gravity again,—back to what it had been in primitive Christianity. That is why they propounded their doctrine of the invisible Church.

Fairbairn traced both the Roman doctrine of the visible Church and the Reformed doctrine of the invisible Church to the same origin in St. Augustine. In his theology, Augustine maintained that grace is free and men are saved (whether within or without the Church) by the will of God, whereas in his ecclesiology grace was made conditional, and salvation dependent on grace as communicated through sacraments and priests constituted by the Church. As Fairbairn explained the historical development, the Roman Church followed St. Augustines ecclesiology; the Reformers, his theology.

The Reformers had first conceived the idea of the invisible Church to explain the presence within the Church of men manifestly evil: but these

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1. Catholicism, p. 184.
2. Ibid, p. 201.

men, they had argued (according to Fairbairn's interpretation of the history) were members of the visible, not the invisible Church. Only persons redeemed by the free grace of God, only men justified by faith, belonged to the people of God: and these, as members in Christ's Kingdom, formed the invisible Church.

The Reformers' arguments against the Roman idea of one Holy Catholic Apostolic Church Fairbairn presented in these terms. To say, 'I <u>believe</u> in the Holy Catholic Church' means that the Church cannot be merely an <u>ecclesia sensibilis</u>, since the objects of faith are invisible.

> 'God who loves, Christ who saves, the Spirit which renews the soul, are unseen; unseen, too, is the soul they love and save and renew, and unseen the society constituted of God out of this and all the other souls He has saved.' (1)

Furthermore the Church is not one, since divided into many sects; nor Catholic, since Roman; nor holy, since ruled by sinful men; nor yet Apostolic, since its political and sacerdotal organization is a far remove from the primitive Church. Finally, man can be saved only by the free grace of God, and that grace can never be bound to one institution.

Nonetheless, the Reformers did not give up the idea of the visible Church: for Fairbairn maintained that for them visible and invisible Church were related as body and soul, each necessary to the other. Now this conception of the visible-invisible Church, Fairbairn argued, more nearly than any other incorporated the primitive Churstian society's idea of polity. The modern polity which was determined by this conception but stemming, like it, in the primitive Christian society, was the Congregational[2] polity of Independent Protestantism.

Historically speaking, there were three steps to what Fairbairn considered the ideal Church polity: from the Roman to the Lutheran to the Congregational.[3] About the first he wrote:

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1. <u>Place of Christ</u>, p. 545.
2. The word should really be written with a small letter, since Fairbairn was not thinking primarily of the denomination, but of the ideal polity.
3. <u>Philosophy</u>, p. 564.

> 'The Church which survived the Roman Empire was an assemblage of new ideas and of ancient customs that had proved their suitability to human nature by living in many religions and surviving many changes of culture and belief; and though it may have helped to preserve the Christian religion, yet it was at the expense of its higher ethical and finer spiritual qualities.'

The Lutheran polity with its emphasis on justification by faith was sounder theologically, but not socially, since failing dismally to give adequate emphasis to the doctrine of the brotherhood of man. Only in the Congregational form of polity, after the long struggle of Independency to establish itself, had the ideal of the primitive society been regained, for in its democratic government the brotherhood of man was assumed to be the only possible expression of the Fatherhood of God. As Fairbairn conceived it, the movement toward realizing the ideal polity had been cyclic, so to say, for the polity of the early Christian society had been Congregational.

> 'And so it is but what was to be expected when we find that the men nearest to Him, who best understood His mind, his own disciples and apostles, followed the Congregational way.' (1)

From the outlook of his idea of the primitive Church and his historical survey, Fairbairn considered the four principal types of possible Church polity: the Monarchical, either absolute as in the Roman Church or limited as in the Anglican; and the Republican, oligarchical as in the Presbyterian Church or democratic (or communal) as in the Congregational. Of the Republican forms of polity, he considered the Congregational superior to the Presbyterian, since the latter is governed by a spiritual aristocracy made up of its ministers and elders, whereas in the former governing powers are not delegated but exercised by all the people as a body. The Papal Church, and in a modified sense the Anglican, could continue only in a feudal state: in a democracy the only polity which can endure is the Republican, which rests solidly on the will of the people on the one hand, on the other upon the will

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1. City of God, p. 277.

of God.

Fairbairn contended, then, that the Catholic polity neither met the needs of the people nor continued the primitive Christian tradition, since according to his argument the whole neo-Catholic movement was based on presuppositions drawn from Patristic thought.[1] He maintained that actually the idea of the 'Divine right of episcopacy'[2] or papacy had been made of no account by historical criticism, and that the study of the early Church form of government revealed that the only ties binding the Churches together were fraternal, never in any sense hierarchical. No man in the early Church, whatever his position, was considered a primate:[3] final authority was always vested in the whole people, although of course men were appointed by the Church (i. e., the people) to exercise a limited authority for the maintenance of order. But nothing could be more obvious, in Fairbairn's view, than that the early Christian society had a Republican organization, since it was democratic or communal in form.

The Establishment of Anglicanism was an incidental factor in his more general criticism of Monarchical polity,--an 'accident', which he thought was destined soon to be set right. He did not think of the Established Church as the National Church, of which he insisted the Nonconformist Churches (or, as he preferred to call them, the 'Free Churches of Jesus Christ') were an integral part: after the disestablishment he saw the Anglican and Nonconformist Churches standing on a more or less equal footing, and then his concern was

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1. Forsyth suggested that Fairbairn 'did much to rescue English thought from Patristic obsession'. (op. cit., p. 2.) All of Fairbairn's arguments were supported with considerable documented historical data, based on the vast amount of research done during the century in the field of Patristic thought.
2. Studies, p. 168.
3. Fairbairn maintained that the evidence of authentic contemporary literature is 'altogether against both the primacy and Roman episcopacy of Peter. The question is capable of being argued only when tradition is introduced. And the tradition, though ancient, is neither apostolic nor primitive--can, indeed, hardly be placed earlier than a century after the event, though it soon becomes uniform and general. The case is arguable, but it is no more.' (Catholicism, p. 179.)

that the predominant English Church should become non-sacerdotal. In regard to the Establishment he held that whenever religion is made a matter of civil law, when man is religious rather as a citizen of a state than as a son of God (so to speak), as in Rome both before and after it was conquered by Christianity or in England, then religion becomes a matter of conformity and not of personal conviction. Hence it loses its power as a regenerative influence on man as individual or on society as a whole. For this reason he considered disestablishment important, since in his view the Established Church, because bound to the State, was not free to preach the Gospel of Christ, especially in its social implications. Yet working for this end was secondary for him, whereas crusading against the Catholic (Roman and Anglican) polity and sacerdotalism was of primary concern, since these were interfering with the proclamation of Christ's essential Gospel to the people of England. Thus he kept reiterating that the basic grounds for dissent were religious rather than political.

> 'We dissent because we believe that she (i. e., the Church of England) fails adequately to interpret and realize for the people of England the religion of Christ.' (1)

Fairbairn's idea of Church polity, then was grounded in a marked religious individualism. It seemed obvious to him that the Congregational polity—of all modern polities—most closely coincided with the organization of the early Christian societies and hence, he insisted, with the mind of Christ. This conviction was further strengthened by his belief that the early Christian societies could best be compared in their polity (as the very name ecclesiae suggested) to the free Greek city states, where ideally each person had an equal share in the responsibility of governing and in the opportunity of carrying forward the work of the Church.[2] Thus he concluded that the

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1. Studies, p. 5.
2. Fairbairn pointed out that the Apostolic writers in their use of the term ecclesia blended the classical (i. e., as used in reference to the Greek free city states) and Hellenistic meanings. The makers of the Septugint he maintained, had applied the Hellenistic meaning (concluded on next page)

Congregational polity, ideally and not denominationally considered, is established on the belief that

> 'as instituted by Christ and as administered by Christian men, it is designed to be the most flexible and educative of polities, the least capable of being perverted from spiritual and ethical to formal and interested ends'. (1)

B. CHRISTIAN WORSHIP.

i. The Ministry: Sacerdotal and Non-sacerdotal in its 'Orders'.

Fairbairn was as militantly opposed to a sacerdotal ministry as to the Monarchical form of Church polity,--and the two, although not necessarily connected, were (he held) usually conjoined. He defined sacerdotalism as the limiting of the action of God's grace to a particular channel. That is to say, according to the sacerdotal claim, the grace of God can be mediated only through a ministry which is specially constituted by the Church through its bishops, who stand in Apostolic succession. Furthermore, the Sacraments are held to be 'the means necessary for the creation and maintenance of spiritual life'.[2] Thus the sacerdotal 'orders' are considered essential to the being of the Anglican Church.

Against this claim Fairbairn defended with great vigour what he considered the historic Protestant position, that worship, to be Christian, must be wholly non-sacerdotal. Any trace of sacerdotalism contaminates Christian worship with the pre-Christian notion that man can take the initiative in the Divine-Human relationship, and that God is a Being whose mind can be changed or whose wrath can be propitiated by the acts of men. But the very genius of Christianity, he contended, was that it did away with all sacerdotal-

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of ecclesia in the Bible when they used the word to translate the Hebrew Kahal, the people in the sense of their corporate being as the holy nation, the elect of God.

1. Studies, pp. 143-4.
2. Ibid, p. 121. Fairbairn here was referring particularly to Anglicanism, and based his interpretation primarily on the writings of Liddon, Lightfoot and Gore.

ism by making Christ the sole institution of worship, and 'in forming and founding this institution . . . the initiative was God's and not man's'.[1]

In the light of the New Testament interpretation of the Church, then, Fairbairn argued that the sacerdotal point of view cannot be sustained, since there is not a trace of sacerdotalism in the New Testament idea of the Christian society. In fact the New Testament writers were studiously careful to reinterpret into their spiritual meaning any sacerdotal ideas which might have been carried over from Judaism. Thus Fairbairn maintained that there is no suggestion in the New Testament that any of the men chosen to represent the new faith were ever named priests, or were ever designated to carry out priestly functions. Ministers were considered neither necessary to the being of a Church nor as intermediaries, but as preachers, teachers, and distributors of beneficences. In fact the basic idea of the new religion was that man could approach God directly, and that in this sense each individual worshipper was himself the priest.

> 'Where all men, by virtue of their faith and common brotherhood in Christ, become priests as He is Priest, the priesthood has ceased to be an office or an order, and become the synonym of Christian manhood, the symbol of the great truth that the reign of official mediators is over, that man and God are now intended to stand face to face as Father and son.' (2)

In this emphasis on the priesthood of all believers, Fairbairn but re-asserted the faith of the Reformers, who (he maintained) had risen to power in their effort to throw off from the Church the trammels of two 'heathen' influences, one sacerdotal and the other, as noted above, political.

To make the transmission of grace dependent on the mediation of a human priest is radically opposed to the New Testament idea of the Church: such was the contention of historic Puritanism and of Fairbairn's so-called 'new' Puritanism. 'God has bound His grace to one Person,' he wrote, 'and to

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1. Philosophy, p. 562.
2. Studies, p. 160.

one Person alone, in the whole history of man.'[1] Fairbairn's fundamental argument, then, was that New Testament Christianity is established on one basic principle: 'the way of the soul to the Father and the Father to the soul must be open, common, free.'[2] When a Church endeavours to limit the universality of Divine grace to the mediation of sinful man, it is vitiating this cardinal Christian principle.

The development of sacerdotalism in the tradition of the Church thus cannot be considered as the evolution of factors latent in primitive Christianity, but due to superadded accretions drawn from the environment. To support this thesis Fairbairn pointed out that before the beginning of the third century the Church had not been contaminated with sacerdotalism: the emphasis was religious-moral, as it had been in the primitive Christian society. The prevailing ideal was stated in one sentence[3] by Fairbairn.

> 'Christ was no priest, appointed no man a priest, erected no temple, established no ritual, laid down no law of sacrifice, enjoined no sacrifice but the sacrifice of clean hands and a pure heart, a holy and noble life unto God.'

When the third century opened, however, Tertullian in Africa described the bishop as summus sacerdos; 'Hippolytus in Italy claims for himself, as successor of the Apostles, the high-priesthood'[4]; and Origen in Alexandria suggests the similarity between Christian ministers and the ancient priests and Levites. In the middle of the century Cyprian firmly established the foreign sacerdotal tendency by giving the clergy 'appropriate sacrificial functions and intercessory duties'.[4] Henceforth sacerdotalism had a permanent place within the Church and grew rapidly. Fairbairn maintained that both Neander and Ritschl were correct in the reasons they gave for the entrance of sacerdotalism into Christianity: Neander, in pointing out that the priesthood

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1. Studies, p. 126.
2. Ibid, p. 128.
3. Religion in History, p. 182.
4. Catholicism, pp. 171, 172.

was carried over directly from Judaism; Ritschl, in holding that it was allowed a place in the new religion because Gentiles could not understand a non-sacerdotal religion. The entrance of the sacerdotal element into Christianity but signalized the victory of the old religions over the religion of Christ, and for this reason Fairbairn believed that in contending against sacerdotalism in religion he was but urging the return of 'Christianity to Christ'.

A sacerdotal ecclesiology further contradicts what Fairbairn held to be the basic tenet of religion, namely, that man is religious by nature and that God has revealed Himself to every man. To maintain that God's presence can be revealed only through a particular Church or a particular sacrament is but to maintain that humanity has been 'forsaken' by God. God is no longer conceived as the majestic Sovereign of man, but as One whose activity can be determined and limited by imperfect man. Thus in one of his articles directed against neo-Catholicism he wrote:[1]

> 'It (i. e., the Anglican ideal of worship) doubted the presence of God in humanity, the activity and reality of His grace outside the limits of a constituted church, and apart from sacramental persons, instruments and symbols. It doubted the sanity of the reason He had given, thought that this reason had so little affinity with its Maker as to be ever tending away from Him, its bent by nature being from God rather than to God. And so it was possessed of the great fear that the reason, freed from the authority and guardian care of an organized and apostolic church, i. e., clergy, would infallibly break from the control of His law and His truth.'

This general line of argument Fairbairn utilized particularly in his polemics against Newman. If we allow Newman's contention (Fairbairn argued) that there are but two alternatives open to man, Atheism or Roman Catholicism, —man is led either by his conscience to infallible authority or by his intellect to Atheism,—it follows that man's nature is divided and conscience is pitted against reason. As we have already seen, however, Fairbairn had implicit faith in the power of reason to establish theism on an impregnable basis, and from that position he could not be moved. Not only can the reason establish

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1. Catholicism, p. 37.

the natural proof for God's existence, but this is the only proof which can have universal validity. Hence Fairbairn steadily maintained that Newman's argument for the authority of the Church and against reason was not only basically unsound, but led Newman into the 'purest individualism'.[1]

The ministry, then, in Fairbairn's view, must always be conceived in terms strictly non-sacerdotal. The minister is a prophet, and he can in no wise ever be considered a priest.[2] The collective society (i. e., the Church) has a priestly function inasmuch as it, as the body of Christ, continues His work. But this function of the Church cannot be delegated to the individual minister, and the attempt to invest him with sacerdotal duties has but caused the ministry to deteriorate, since Fairbairn held that with a sacerdotal clergy the chief attention was paid to the office and not to the man. The function of the ministry is prophetic, and as such its method is that of persuasion, which Fairbairn thought one of the most distinctive things about the religion of Christ. 'It comes and appeals to reason, it speaks to intellect, it tries to persuade spirit.'[3]

Fairbairn's conception of the ministry may be summarized in several propositions. It must be personal, not official, since 'the man does not become sacred by virtue of the office, but the office is sanctified by the man'.[4] The minister is placed in his position by the act of God, and is responsible only to Him. The only priesthood possible to him comes from himself, since he, as one of its members, is an organic part of the Church. His ideal should be 'to act and think and speak as if in him Jesus Christ really lived, and was once more serving God by saving man'.[5]

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1. Catholicism, p. 130.
2. When speaking of the minister leading his people in prayer, however, he said that the minister 'stands in their place and pleads in their name before God'. (Studies, p. 274.)
3. Religion in History, pp. 189-90.
4. Studies, p. 417.
5. Ibid, p. 418.

In taking its resolute stand for a non-sacerdotal ministry, Independent Protestantism in England during the latter part of the nineteenth century, with Fairbairn as one of its leaders, re-affirmed with power the historic Protestant position: that each individual should have 'the right to worship God as the reason knew Him, and the conscience honoured Him, and the heart loved Him'.[1] And in this crusade against sacerdotalism Fairbairn thought of himself as in the van of theological thought and ecclesiastical life.

ii. The Word of the Gospel and the Sacrament.

For the continuance of the visible Church, Fairbairn maintained that only two 'elements' are necessary: the Word of the Gospel and the Sacrament.[2] The Word as contained in the New Testament is the authoritative Gospel, authoritative because through it the revelation of God in Christ is mediated to modern man. Thus Fairbairn held that the Word is the living link between the primitive and contemporary Church, between the mind of Christ as interpreted by the Apostles and present-day men. The Word of the Gospel is the basis for preaching, and preaching is the central nerve of the Church. For even as praise and prayer are the ways in which man speaks to God, so preaching in Fairbairn's judgment is the medium through which God speaks to man. The sermon, as Fairbairn expressed the idea,

> 'ought to come as the response of God to the cry of man, as the uprising of His light upon those who are sitting in darkness, half inclined to fear that the dawn might never come.' (3)

Fairbairn was insistent that not the Eucharist (or in Roman Churches the moment of consecrating or elevating the Host) but the sermon was the supreme act of Christian worship. No act of ritual could have the significance of the sermon for him, since he considered that hearing it exercised the intellect,

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1. Studies, p. 59.
2. In this connection Fairbairn speaks of Sacraments, that is, in the plural. Actually he never mentions Baptism in all his writing, except when it happens to come into his historical surveys. For this reason only the Eucharist will be considered in this section.
3. Studies, p. 276.

whereas participation in ritual all too often but dulled the mental faculties. His authority for thus making the preaching of the Word the central act of worship he drew from our Lord's example: for he maintained that our Lord Himself was pre-eminently teacher and preacher, and similarly the Apostles by His explicit command were primarily preachers. The theme of their preaching was Jesus Christ and Him crucified. The reason to Fairbairn seemed apparent: they were seeking to exhibit truth, not in its manifold aspects, but in a 'splendid focus' where all its rays converged, as it were, in a 'point of living light, which they termed the Christ'.[1] They were seeking to engender among their hearers faith in a Person, and thus the people who listened were to enter the Kingdom of Truth. And their method was always that of persuasion. Hence it is the minister not as priest but as prophet, as preacher, who is significant as an emissary of our Lord: the inspired man who, as Fairbairn expressed it, 'sees and knows the truth which is God's', 'the man who can send forth winged words bearing the quickening truth of God, who has done most to conserve religion, enlarge and refine the Church and uplift man.'[2]

The Sacrament of the Eucharist (as such) is not a peculiar means of salvation, in Fairbairn's conception of it. He considered it as a symbol which expresses the relation between the 'people of God' and Christ, their common Head,—at the same time binding these people into a brotherhood. It is a 'condition of higher fellowship, a means of communion'.[3] To make the Eucharist the solitary channel for God's grace and thus to place into the hands of sinful men, considered as priests, the power to give or to withhold such grace is a veritable travesty of the Gospel, according to Fairbairn's conviction: for he kept insisting that the most determinative idea in the New Testament is that grace is free to all men and that it would be wholly impossible

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1. Studies, p. 24.
2. Ibid, p. 418, and Life, p. 209.
3. Philosophy, p. 561. Fairbairn thought of the Eucharist as a means to establish communion between Christ as High Priest and man. (Concluded on next page)

to conceive of that grace being controlled by any Church or by any man because he happened to hold a certain position. Even to imagine that it might be possible so to confine it resulted inevitably in the conception of a limited God who was not Sovereign but 'whose working men condition, whose mercies they circumscribe, whose grace they regulate and distribute'.[1]

Christian worship, then, and the Church itself (Fairbairn ever and again stressed) should always be conceived as a means, never as an end in itself. The goal toward the attaining of which the Church is the means is manifest: that men shall be formed in the image of Christ, that its members shall be made so vividly aware of the living God that they will carry into action in the world the spirit and principles of our Lord, making that spirit and those principles determinative for all their relations with their fellows.

C. THE KINGDOM OF GOD AS SOCIAL IDEAL.

i. Religion and Morality.

In his polemics against Catholicism Fairbairn roundly said that worship—and the Church—is never an end in itself, but primarily a means to the attainment of one goal,—the development of moral man and a moral society. Later he modified this extreme position, and stated that the function of worship is to 'qualify man to fulfil the divine purpose'. Looked at in this light, worship has an ultimate and a proximate end, the former being the glory of God, the latter 'to form the good man, but this is conceived as the way to that'.[2]

His general contention was that faith and morality are indissolubly conjoined, and that faith cannot but express itself in moral action. As he stated the idea in a sermon:[3]

'The religious man must be moral, the man who is really moral in

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Curiously enough, he did not consider this communion as worship of God, but only preparation for such worship.

1. Place of Christ, p. 548.
2. Philosophy, pp. 563-4.
3. Sermons, p. 186.

> being and action must be religious. Religion is the manifestation of morality; morality the incarnation, the manifestation in the flesh of religion.'

The notion that religion had nothing to do with morality he considered pagan. That it is nothing but morality he held to be completely false and a view most representative of eighteenth century rationalism. In this emphasis on morality as an integral part of the Christian organism, Fairbairn repudiated the position of Kant, who tended to make of faith but an appendage to morality; nor did he follow the Ritschlian modification of the Kantian position.

One of the chief reasons for Fairbairn's mordant criticism of any sacerdotalism in religion was that he considered that inevitably a stress on the sacerdotal involved a neglect of the moral outworking of religion. When the sacerdotal is emphasized, he asserted time and again, worship deteriorates into the giving of a quid pro quo; and ethical implications are lost in the sensuous ritual of the cultus. He illustrated this principle from Hinduism, in which the ethical emphasis of its early stages was sloughed off when an official priesthood developed; similarly in ancient Greece, where morality was the concern only of philosophy, not of the sacerdotal religion; in the same way the ethical standard in Rome came from the Stoics, not from the official state religion which was dominated by priests; even in Judaism the prophets in making their ethical demands of Israel had to combat the influence of the priests.

Although Fairbairn pointed out that early religion when most domestic and least official was the 'most lucid, imperative and impressive in its ethical teaching'[1], his main contention in this respect was that in Christ faith and morality had first been bound together, at least morality considered not so much as external law as internal motivation. For Fairbairn argued that even as our Lord superseded Levitical Judaism by Himself being the High Priest

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1. Philosophy, p. 559.

and only Mediator, so He also superseded the Rabbinic legalism by Himself becoming the ethical ideal for those who believed in Him. Religion and morality become one in Christ because God as revealed in Christ is the Holy God, the Father who is completely moral in all His relations: Fairbairn then maintained that since religion is but the relation between God and man, the relation itself must be a moral one (and hence not to be sustained by ceremonialism). And if the relation between God and man be real it cannot but result, since itself moral, in moral relations with fellow human beings.

Christianity in becoming a universal religion at the same time of necessity became social: from this fundamental tenet Fairbairn developed his Christian social ethics. For in his view it was an inherent necessity of the Christian Gospel to shake off the localizing trammels which would have restricted it to one people. Christ's Gospel was both ideal and universal, and was for man as man. As the Gospel was interpreted by the early Apostles, it could not but become missionary. For Fairbairn maintained that our Lord revealed to every man (regardless of race or position) his sonship to God, thus giving him a new sense of human dignity, a sense of the value of the individual before God and so before all men.

> 'Hence the Christian idea created two novel notions as to man: the value of the unit and the unity of the race.' If, then, 'Christ be rightly interpreted, the worst sins against God are those most injurious to man.' (1)

These principles, entirely new in the world at the time of Christ, were not only implied but made explicit in the Gospel, as Fairbairn interpreted it: for our Lord consciously held a social ideal and taught (at least by example) a social method. The social ideal was tersely described in the twin commandment,—love (and hence obedience) to God, which found inevitable further expression in love (and hence fulfilment of duty) to fellow man. The social

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1. Philosophy, pp. 544, 565.

method was that of making disciples: the constraint of love for Christ changes the man and thus changes the environment. The method involved 'teaching men to become like Himself'.[1] The ideal and method taken together became the 'law' for the Kingdom and hence determinative for the new society which is the Church: Christ's people are to become ethical as the articulation (so to say) of Himself, and so become in very truth the Body of Christ.

Although Fairbairn insisted that the Christian religion is nothing if not ethical, he also pointed out that its morality is not that of a positive religion which sets forth a number of laws to be obeyed,--as it tended to become, however, in the Roman Church. Rather is Christianity based on loyalty to a Person who as idea and ideal governs man's reason and conscience,--the transcendental idea of Christ as the Incarnate Son of God, who is at the same time the embodied ideal, as it were, of humanity.

ii. Christianity and Social Action.

The humanitarian emphasis of the eighteenth century had been carried along with the rationalist approach to religion. During the Victorian era this humanitarianism became more definitive and gradually changed the stress of the Church from individual to social salvation. The recovery of the Historical Jesus influenced the Church to re-interpret the Gospel, and in the re-interpretation the social implications of the Christian proclamation (so it was thought) were discovered to be integral to it. What the Church in its course through history had lost and needed to recapture, it was said, was the 'Christianity of Christ',--a catch-phrase which supposedly pointed to the social implications as a definite part of the message of our Lord.

Seeley in his Ecce Homo argued that the essential part of our Lord's message, both in word and action, was its humanitarianism; and Jesus Himself was delineated as a socialist. The corporate solidarity of society came to be

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1. Philosophy, p. 527.

stressed: it is saved or lost as a unit. 'Nobody can be saved from society, he must be saved with it.'[1] Fairbairn in general followed this tendency of his times. His point of view is expressed in one sentence.[2]

> 'It (i. e., Christian salvation) is not finished when a man is forgiven, or has obtained peace with God; it is completed only when Christ is all and in all—that is, when humanity has been built up in all its parts and regulated in all its relations by the ideal of love and sonship that had lived from eternity in the bosom of God.'

Most probably a cardinal motive for Fairbairn's impassioned criticism of Catholicism, Roman and Anglican, stemmed from his profound conviction that the Catholic revival in the nineteenth century and the Establishment of the Anglican Church were the responsible factors for the widespread disbelief in England during his time. His reiterated emphasis was that the causes of this disbelief were not primarily intellectual, but moral. It did not spring directly from Christianity itself, but from the Churches which failed to preach and teach the religion of Christ and were chiefly interested in maintaining their 'vested and conventional respectabilities'.[3] At the very moment (it seemed to Fairbairn) when the Evangelical Revival had brought the religious temper in England to a white heat and had prepared the way for Christianity really to make giant strides toward attaining its ideal of a social brotherhood whose roots were religious, a resurgent sacerdotalism swept from the Churches all religious reality, which the Revival actually had recaptured. The Established Church, moreover, had severed itself from the life of the people, and hence had forfeited the right to exist as the visible embodiment of Christ's Kingdom on earth.

This isolation from the people was especially marked, Fairbairn argued, in the Church's failure to identify itself with the new and increasingly complicated problems of the working man as the factory spread over the indus-

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1. McGiffert, op. cit., p. 277. I owe the reference to Ecce Homo to McGiffert. The phrase, 'the Christianity of Christ', which Fairbairn used liberally in his writing (with the above connotation) may have come into nineteenth century jargon from Saint Simon, who used it in his last work.
2. Religion in History, p. 254.
3. Ibid, p. 18.

trial midlands. The conditions of the working classes, in fact, was the problem for the whole point of view defended by Fairbairn: for what of the evolutionary doctrine of progress, born in the eighteenth century and carefully fostered through the nineteenth, which clearly was shown to be working itself out in action by the general increase of wealth and comfort? Yet even if man demonstrably was growing better--assuredly he was not a fallen but a 'rising' creature--and if his social life was improving with him, the condition of the working classes obviously was getting worse. This problem, while only slightly tempering the buoyant optimism of the century, was probably the chief stimulus for the growth of the modern social conscience, as it developed under the nurture of such men as Robert Owen and the Christian Socialists. Fairbairn himself, while opposed to Socialism as such, worked vigorously at the articulation of the problem and always insisted that the task of the Church was to aim at its solution.

The problem was not to be solved by organizing evangelistic missions for working people, Fairbairn dryly pointed out. Nor was the answer to be found in the philanthropy which had interpreted our Lord's monition for brotherly love wholly in terms of charity,--a situation which had also obtained in the pre-Reformation Church. Fairbairn's contention was that in the light of the Christian Gospel, man must be viewed as man and hence that all men must be treated as essential equals before God and also before their fellows. Striving for justice must thus supplant the giving of charity; and since the Gospel clearly has economic implications, the Church must work for the attainment of economic justice.

Without doubt Fairbairn with his confidence in the essential goodness of man[1] believed in a social reform 'from above rather than below'

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1. In his system of theology, it will be remembered, Fairbairn stated that the Cross convinced man of the awfulness of sin, rather than convicting him of the awfulness of his sin.

(in McGiffert's phrase), that the privileged classes could be persuaded to give up their economic advantages in the interests of establishing social justice and more equal rights among men. For that reason he placed his faith in stimulating friendly co-operation between Capital and Labour as the method to achieve economic justice. 'Were the Christian idea of brotherhood made a living and governing idea, our gravest industrial problems either were solved or would never have been propounded.'[1]

Possibly Fairbairn's general method of approach to social problems can be indicated by summarily stating his attitude to one of them: poverty. Naturally he pointed out that a land's true wealth is to be measured by the area of its distribution, not by the amount concentrated in a few hands. But he held that the Church had a very specific responsibility in regard to this problem.

> 'Men have a right to expect that religion, as Christian religion, shall cure poverty, shall make the charity that is at once the luxury of the rich and the misery of the poor, cease; shall bring a time when wealth, equally distributed, shall create the happiest of civil and social and secular states.' (2)

But what shall be the method of the Church? For Fairbairn the principle always held that religion must save the individual, and the individual then will work to redeem society. Thus if a man is possessed by the Spirit of Christ, 'the miserable greed that can make money out of the poverty or destitution of man is not only impossible, but unholy and abominable'.[3] Clearly if religion and morality are integral to each other, it must be the task of the Church to show that faith and conduct cannot be held separate. The task of the Church is the redemption of mankind, and to Fairbairn it seemed obvious that such redemption included the creation in society of conditions making for moral and physical health in each individual. If we can judge by our Lord's attitude

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1. Studies, p. 98.
2. Religion in History, pp. 177-8.
3. Ibid, p. 263.

toward moral and physical sickness, Fairbairn argued, this is plainly part of the purpose of God, and the task of the Church is not finished 'while one soul remains outside the ends of God; and outside His ends every soul lives who loves sin more than his Maker'.[1] But the very point Fairbairn made so forcibly was that social sin in many instances made such individual 'love of sin' almost inevitable, and hence the Church must strike at the roots of that sin in society. The Church, moreover, should not seek to save the sinner 'for his own sake merely, but for the sake of the God that made him, and made him to be good, and means him still to become what He made him to be'.[2]

But with all his emphasis on the social implications of the Christian Gospel, Fairbairn was essentially individualistic in his approach to social problems. As he saw it, the cardinal task of the Church is so to surcharge individuals with the moral dynamic which is the love of Christ that they will be religious men in their offices and trades; and to break down class barriers by bringing together men from various groups into the fellowship of the Church. He also maintained that all forces working for social amelioration, if not held under the aegis of the Church where they originated, lose their essential power: for 'Christ created the idea of humanity (and hence, Fairbairn would say, of humanitarianism), and divorced from Him it is but a bastard idea, at once emasculated and depraved'.[3] Whatever the specific form of social action, —prison reform, rehousing schemes for the poor, the distribution of wealth,— all

> 'need to be gathered into an organic whole, into a living structure, placed in relation to a great throbbing centre. You cannot have sporadic, dismembered, isolated Christian forces, walking up and down the land doing their work: you must bring all into unity, you must centre, converge, weld them into the great central thought, into the mighty living organism. Without Christ, without the Eternal Father, without the living

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1. Studies, p. 431.
2. City of God, p. 273.
3. Religion in History, p. 258.

> Saviour and the living God, they are impotent, destined to slow, inevitable death.' (1)

This attitude of Fairbairn is of especial interest in view of the regret often expressed that the Church has not retained its hold over what have become the 'lost provinces of religion' and in view of the fact that in the past few decades (it is generally recognized) many of the Churches in placing particular emphasis on the 'social gospel' have tended to become sociological and hence secular rather than distinctively Christian in their approach.

iii. The Kingdom of God.

Fairbairn's theology found its culmination in the concept of the Kingdom of God. He conceived it essentially in Ritschlian terms, that is, the Kingdom was founded and personally exemplified by our Lord and is gradually to be established in history. There is just a trace of Utopianism in his notion of the ideal City of God which is realizable: 'though it ever retreats it is yet being ever approached'. In his concept of the Kingdom there is also something of the evolutionary idea of a teleological process in history which realizes itself, so to speak. Yet essentially his idea is that man must achieve the Kingdom; and as he struggles toward attainment, the ameliorative forces incarnate within the ideal effect a beneficent influence on all conditions in society: political, intellectual, moral and religious. In Fairbairn's view this ideal is unique to Christianity: the notion of a 'divine society, humanity organized into a city or state that should perfectly express and realize the will of God . . . has no parallel in any religion or system of antiquity'. [3]

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1. Religion in History, p. 258. 2. Studies, p. 143.
3. Religion in History, p. 162. Fairbairn held that the parables of the Kingdom were spoken by Jesus to illustrate the social ideal in the new religion he instituted. In this connection he mentions especially the parables of the 'second period'; the tares, the mustard seed, the leaven, the hidden treasure, the pearl of great price, the net cast into the sea.
   Professor Taylor's reference to the tendency to emphasize these parables is of interest: 'Even the most strictly orthodox divines of that generation habitually think of the establishment of the Kingdom of God itself by preference in terms of the parables of the (concluded on next page)

In this interpretation of the Kingdom of God, Fairbairn was carried in the predominant idealist current of thought of his generation. This idealism

> 'was above all things concerned to find within this world, within the life of the family, of the State, of secular civilization, those religious values which had so often been thought of as belonging to another world than this where "they neither marry nor are given in marriage" and as manifested in this world only or chiefly through institutions whose authority and sanctions were supernatural. . . ' (1)

From this general line of thought, too, came the tendency to conceive eternal life in terms of a quality of living which can be attained here and now, rather than in terms of duration of life beyond the earth years. Fairbairn stressed this 'nowness' of eternal life in certain instances, as when he wrote:[2]

> 'What does not make the most of man for time and of time for man will not make the best of his eternity. Eternity is now; the man who is, is man the immortal, and the aim of religion ought to be to realize the ideal of God in every man and in all his relations.'

This idealist bias is seen in Fairbairn's apparent lack of concern for the Christian eschatology and his neglect of portions of the Gospel records which are manifestly eschatological, in his emphasis on the Cross but lack of it on the Resurrection,[3] in his failure to consider the doctrine of immortality in his dogmatic theology,[4] in his whole approach to Christian social ethics.

In interpreting the Kingdom, then, Fairbairn was influenced by the idealist philosophy and also by the democratic ideal everywhere on the ascendent in the nineteenth century. The former led him to interpret the Kingdom as a social ideal to be realized in time; the latter caused him to conceive that ideal in equalitarian, democratic terms.

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unseen growth of the grain of mustard-seed and the slow working of the leaven hidden in the mass of dough; they allow the comparison of the revelation of the Son of Man with the sudden flash of lightning which lays the heavens bare to fall into the background.' (op. cit., Vol. II, p. 163.)

1. Webb, Religious Thought in England from 1850, pp. 107-8.
2. Studies, p. 99.
3. In his Studies in the Life of Christ he did include a chapter on the Resurrection. But his main concern in this essay was to prove its historicity.
4. He wrote a lengthy essay on "The Belief in Immortality", but this was a comparative study of the belief in India and Greece.

Now as we have seen, Fairbairn believed that Jesus instituted the Kingdom as a society on earth at the beginning of His ministry. Yet actually it was founded through His Incarnation. Hence Fairbairn maintained that the realization of the Kingdom on earth must also be conceived in terms of incarnation, that the Kingdom actually is gradually being realized by a process which he called 'continuous incarnation' of the Spirit of God in man, which results in 'progressive filiation'.

> 'For the Spirit shapes the later sons, singly, after the image of the First-born, collectively, into a unity which is on the Godward side a sonship, on the manward a brotherhood.' (1)

Thus through the Spirit man can become ethically what Christ was essentially, and the common brotherhood of man is formed through the multiplication of sons of God. This idea was vividly expressed by Tolstoi when he said that men by imitating Jesus could become 'little Christs'. The Kingdom of God, according to this notion, consists in all men gradually being transformed into little Christs, or as Fairbairn stated it, into ideal sonship. This conception of the Kingdom, as Principal Garvie points out,[2] is directly related to Fairbairn's doctrine of God: 'From the divine paternity he not only infers human fraternity, but as immediately and necessarily consequent on it liberty and equality-democracy.'

The Kingdom in this sense, then, is progressively being realized (according to Fairbairn's eschatology) by the mind of our Lord being incarnated within the institutions of society because that mind has first been incarnated within individual human beings.

To sum up, then, Fairbairn considered that religion and morality are integral to each other. But morality cannot be thought of merely in personal terms: it is essentially social. Individual man can be redeemed only

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1. Place of Christ, p. 491.
2. Lond. Quat., op. cit., p. 34.

as society is redeemed. The progressive redemption of society, by means of individuals being surcharged with the Spirit of our Lord, results at long last in the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth. The Kingdom itself is conceived in equalitarian, democratic terms: hence the Church as the Kingdom in miniature should similarly be conceived. For that reason the Congregational form of polity is the best, although it also most clearly embodies the idea its Founder had for the Christian society.

The multitude of sects and Churches did not trouble Fairbairn, for he considered them but an indication of the inexhaustible variety of ways in which our Lord can work through men. No doubt he would have agreed with the position of Canon Hodgson when he writes: 'If the Church is to be regarded not primarily as an Ark of Salvation, but as the instrument of God's purpose, there is no inherent impossibility in the thought that what He needs is not a single vessel but a fleet.'[1] In this connection Fairbairn's own words[2] are:

> 'From the strife of the sects we would return into the calm and gracious presence of Him who is at once the Head and the Heart of His Church. He has given us His peace, and it abides with us even amid the collisions and contradictions of men. These are but of time, while He is of eternity. And in His presence we may not meet negation with negation, and affirm of those who say that there is no Church but theirs, that theirs is no Church of Christ; on the contrary, we shall draw no narrower limits than those traced by the hand of the Son of man: "Whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother."'

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1. Essays in Christian Philosophy, p. 140.
2. Place of Christ, p. 548.

CHAPTER VII. RETROSPECT.

Fairbairn's influence seems to have faded almost completely from the theological horizon. As one of his former students remarked, that is the initial problem in seeking to appraise his work. It would indeed seem as if his work might better be compared with the flight of a comet across the sky than with a fixed star.

There is no question that he profoundly influenced the thought of his own day. But to think of his stress on the comparative study of religions, of his interpretation of German to British thought, of his insistent stand against obscurantism in Biblical criticism, and of his resolute and vigorous defence of religion against naturalism shows to some degree the importance of his work for his contemporaries and accounts for the wide popularity of his writing among his generation. If, moreover, he tended to dispel the sense of mystery from religious experience, his massive attempts to establish the rationality of the Christian faith on a solid foundation provided a valuable apologetic for an age of uncertainty, when religious doubt, pessimism, and naturalistic speculation seemed to be undermining the foundations of belief.

A partial answer to the sudden eclipse of his influence is given by Principal Franks when he suggests that Fairbairn as professor did his work so well that those who sat in his classrooms had little need to refer to his written tomes after leaving Mansfield College. Another partial answer is that he undoubtedly failed to keep abreast of developments in Biblical criticism and theological thought; and when rapid advances in both fields were made in the early part of this century (especially in the approach to the New Testament because of Schweitzer's notable work), his own writings were left far behind.

The fuller explanation, however, lies in the fact that like his master Dorner he was a mediator, as his former students agree and his writings

abundantly testify. In a mediatorial capacity he stood on at least four fronts: (1) between dogmatic Calvinism and a more liberal Protestant theology; (2) between a dogmatic opposition to science and a reasonable rapprochement between science and religion; (3) between the unhistorical approach to Christianity, and theological investigation grounded in historical and hence in the critical method, as applied in the comparative study of religions and in Biblical criticism; (4) between the predominant empiricism of British thought and the transcendental idealism of German theology and philosophy.

As has been pointed out, all theology to some degree must be mediating in the sense of interpreting Christian truth for different generations. But Fairbairn's at times was mediating theology in a 'bad sense',--'theology that blurs its outlines by taking two different ways at once'.[1] The aptness of this criticism becomes evident as we look in retrospect from the vantage of the present theological position toward Fairbairn's work in its setting at the beginning of the century.

i. Reason and Revelation.

Fairbairn's basic tenets in regard to religion in general and to Christianity in particular may more or less be considered fundamental to the position most representative of the main current of modern British theology, although they would be wholly repudiated by the dialectic theology. Thus Fairbairn's contention that God has revealed Himself to every man,--that if man were atheistic by nature there would be no Anknüpfungspunkt (so to say) between God and man, would be sustained by all who maintain, against Professor Barth, that it is only the image of God in man that makes him a human being. It is difficult to see how the Word could be preached to any effect to men from whom the imago Dei had been totally obliterated. One of the few points on which

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1. "The Theology of Andrew Martin Fairbairn", op. cit.

Fairbairn and Barth would in all probability agree is the importance of the preaching of the Word: but Fairbairn always insisted that the Word has a point of contact, an entrance point as it were, with sinful man, since God in making man for Himself did not make him wholly other than Himself. One can almost hear Fairbairn vigorously reprehending Barth by pointing to the sheer futility of preaching the Gospel to men who have no more knowledge of God than stones or cats. The sheer supernaturalism involved in converting a man from whom all trace of the imago Dei had been wiped out would have been utterly repudiated by Fairbairn as the sort of miracle which he always termed 'intervention'.

Similarly Fairbairn's point of view in regard to the relation between Christianity and the other historical religions was wholly opposed to the extreme Christocentrism of the Ritschlians, who through Hermann have profoundly influenced Barth. The Ritschlian-Barthian Schools emphasize the exclusiveness of the revelation of God in Christ: before Christ—and hence in religions other than Christian—there was no true religious or moral knowledge. Against this notion, which seems to lose the Father in the Son (as he expressed it), Fairbairn stressed the all-inclusiveness of Christ. He quoted with approval Justin Martyr, 'Whatever things have been rightly said have been said for us', and agreed wholeheartedly with those Fathers of the Church who recognized, as they put it, Socrates and Plato as 'Christians before Christ'. This point of view (which bears the marks of Augustinian and Thomist thought) may be said to be fairly characteristic of British (especially Anglican) theology, particularly since its own roots are so deeply sunk in Platonism. If the main line of modern theological thought would hardly follow Professor Horton in his assertion that 'the man who knows only Christ does not even know Christ',[1] since this notion is too closely linked with Max Müller's idea ('Wer diese Religion kennt, kennt keine'), now repudiated, it would, I take it, acknowledge as sound the

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1. Revelation, p. 264 (op. cit.)

position stated by Professor Webb.[1]

> 'Very early in the history of the Christian religion the main body of the Church had refused to follow Marcion in seeing in Christ's advent a sudden invasion from without of a world whose maker and lord was other than the Father whom Christ came to reveal. But the full working out of the principle involved in this refusal was inevitably delayed until, with the advance of historical knowledge in the nineteenth century, Christianity could be envisaged as the culmination of a universal process which was at once God's revelation of himself to man and man's discovery of God; for how could God be discovered except by his own act, or reveal himself except to a mind prepared for the reception of the revelation?'

Fairbairn took essentially this position when he maintained that all religious truth, wherever or however it may have found expression, is of Christ, since as truth it must be of God. As it has been well stated: in so far as Isaiah or Mohammed or the Buddha had knowledge of God, it must have been knowledge of the Triune God, since that is the only God there is.

While never falling in entirely with the idea that the 'highest common factor' of all the religions can be discovered after investigating them all,—a notion which quite undercuts the mission motive,—Fairbairn did consider that Christianity could be known as the supreme universal religion only after other historical religions had been studied. With this view he tended to consider the Incarnation but a special instance of an evolutionary process of progressive revelation, and failed adequately to emphasize what Brunner calls the Einmaligkeit of the revelation in Christ,—an emphasis made in the symposium Revelation by each of the seven writers representative of modern theological thought. But Fairbairn certainly did not hold the 'highest common factor' view in its extreme form (e. g., as promulgated by Spencer), for he always stressed that each of the historical religions is unique in its own way. If in theory he drew up canons of criticism to be applied to all the Founders of religions (Christ included),—and it probably would be generally admitted that here he took the wrong tack,—he actually did not apply these canons in his delineation of

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1. Religious Thought in England from 1850, p. 167.

our Lord.

In his study of the historical religions, while making many shrewd insights, especially into Buddhism, it has already been stated that Fairbairn did not give what would today be considered an adequate interpretation of Old Testament religion,--and this chiefly because he drew a sharp antithesis between prophet and priest and tended to interpret the Old Testament in terms of Levitical sacerdotalism. Since his day the centre of attention in the Old Testament has shifted from Law to Prophecy, and the true significance of Judaism as the religion which cradled our Lord has become more clearly apparent. Fairbairn manifestly neglected the Prophecy in the Old Testament: hence it would generally be admitted now that his entire perspective was wrong, as (for instance) when he was led into saying that there was too little of spirit and truth in the Hebraic Deity to enable Israel to comprehend the awfulness of sin.

If Fairbairn's thought in regard to the revelation of God to all men is in accord with that of many contemporary theologians, his sharp delimitation between natural and revealed religion is no longer generally recognized among Protestant thinkers. Natural religion has (so to say) been baptized into revealed, and thus the idea that God can be the end result of a speculative process has been repudiated. Hence the Medieval Synthesis which Fairbairn consistently set forth in his exposition of the idea of revelation is no longer followed, emphasis now being placed on the conviction that <u>all</u> knowledge of God is revealed. Such knowledge, moreover, comes not, it is held, in the form of divinely given truths about God (as Fairbairn believed). 'What is offered to man's apprehension in any specific Revelation is not truth concerning God but the living God Himself.'[1]

The contemporary concept of 'general' revelation includes, however, the idea (repudiated by the Barthians) that God reveals Himself to some degree

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1. Temple, <u>Nature, Man and God</u>, p. 322.

at least through nature and history, as St. Paul declares.[1] But God reveals Himself, man does not speculatively construe Him out of data he has himself discovered, as Fairbairn steadily maintained he could and should. Thinkers in Britain who have more closely followed Fairbairn in defending the thesis that religion can be metaphysically justified are Rashdall, Tennant,[2] and Principal Franks.[3] Sorley[4] has also set forth with great eloquence the theistic argument from man's moral consciousness, and God according to his thesis is an inference (as it were) drawn from moral values. The more general consensus of theological thought in our day, as I understand it, would maintain that the being of God cannot be 'proved' by speculation: if He is not at the beginning of a chain of argument, He cannot be found at the end as the final link of the chain.

The complete confidence in human reason which is expressed by Fairbairn and thinkers such as those just mentioned (which is rather closely akin to eighteenth century rationalism) has been greatly modified and in some areas of thought completely destroyed. The dialectic theologians would disenfranchise reason in God and man, placing their whole emphasis on the Ockhamist tradition,—that is to say, on the Will of God and on man's being completely determined by that Will. According to this view, man is to act not because the action is right, but because God has willed that action. Thus reason in man has been obliterated with the imago Dei, and reason in God has at the least been made wholly subservient to His Will.

Fairbairn himself would have repudiated this extreme voluntaristic view, since he always stressed that God is conditioned by His nature: for him the character of God was correlative with, yet always determinative of, the

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1. Rom. i, 20; Acts xvii, 26-7. H. R. Mackintosh, from whom I have these references, develops this idea in The Christian Apprehension of God, pp.37f.
2. Philosophical Theology, Cambridge, 1925.
3. The Metaphysical Justification of Religion; The Atonement.
4. Moral Values and the Idea of God.

Sovereignty. In this contention he would be supported by the tendency in theological thought which, while recognizing the tremendous importance of their reaction against nineteenth century immanentism, has not completely followed the Barthians. Most modern theologians, however, would not be apt to agree with Fairbairn that man 'is reason' as God is Reason: rather would they say that because man bears the imago Dei he has reason to a limited degree as derivable from God. This reason is not redeemed, however, as Fairbairn held, else why would man most often be unreasonable in his actions? In failing adequately to stress original sin in man, he was inordinately optimistic about man's reasonableness: he did not sufficiently take into account what is more generally and poignantly realized today, that man is a fallen creature. In addition it would usually be held now that he placed too much emphasis on the discursive reason and hence failed to appreciate in full measure intuitive reason, as in the instance of his controversy with Newman, when he completely condemned the Cardinal's notion of the 'illative sense'. Similarly his occasional tendency to hypostatize reason would generally be thought subversive, since based on a 'faculty' psychology. Fairbairn's usual emphasis, in fact, was placed against such faculty psychology, for he urged time and again that intellect, feeling and emotion--the whole man--are active in religion.

If much recent thought would disparage Fairbairn's attempt to establish the existence of God by speculation, it probably would be inclined to accept in a more general way his belief in the serviceableness of philosophy to theology, in this again turning away with him from the Ritschlian-Barthian strongly marked bias against philosophy. Fairbairn no doubt resolved the tension between philosophy and theology too easily, and it would probably be generally agreed, as Archbishop Temple says, that there 'ought to be tension between Philosophy and Religion. That tension is only relaxed when one of the

two assimilates itself excessively to the other.'[1] But the tension is not to be so great as to deny the serviceableness of philosophy in helping faith to build an apologetic and an interpretation of itself with which to face the world. British thought in general, I believe, would make this approach; and Professor Heim of Tübingen is also a notable exponent of it, in this attitude standing against the extreme Calvinism of Professor Barth. Canon Hodgson suggests in this connection:[2]

> '. . . In arguing for the usefulness of philosophy to theology, I am not asking you to range yourself with catholicism against protestantism, or with Calvinists against Lutherans, or with any one church or group of churches against any other. I am urging upon you a view which is held in every one of the great communions of Christendom. From time to time, in this communion or that, it has to fight to maintain its foothold against some recurring wave of obscurantism; but we need not waver in our faith as to the ultimate issue.'

This view, I take it, would accurately represent the predominant attitude among present day British theologians, as it is the view which Fairbairn consistently held.

In the science-religion conflict of the late nineteenth century, Fairbairn's resolute stand against a naturalistic and for a spiritual interpretation of the universe and human life was of not inconsiderable significance for his generation, and the general lines of his thought have been followed by all who seek in the interests of the Christian faith to make a reasonable rapprochement between the two fields. The point he emphasized so consistently is elementary, and yet the need for stressing it has continued (as in B. H. Streeter's writings), namely, that science can deal with processes, but only religion can speak of ultimate beginnings and ends. Science can describe, but religion seeks to explain. It should be recognized to his credit that Fairbairn was one of the comparatively few religionists in his day who never contended against the Darwinian hypothesis as being subversive to religion, but

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1. Op. cit., p. 55.
2. The Grace of God in Faith and Philosophy, p. 11.

granted that it was a useful scientific theory. He also pointed out, however, that neither this nor any other scientific theory can throw any light on the 'why' or 'whither' of man. It can tell nothing of human origins or destiny. It can take into account (to use Streeter's terms) only the quantitative, never the qualitative factors of existence.

Fairbairn also argued ably against the Deist conception of the universe which was generally held in the nineteenth century, the notion that nature is a dead inert mass and that as such it is a closed system. If it was thought that God worked on the world at all, it was maintained that He must do so from the 'outside', like Paley's manlike artificer or by an impersonal energy acting on matter (the nineteenth-century scientists' concept of force). Fairbairn emphasized the idea which has been becoming more and more widely accepted, that nature is not so much like a mechanism as an organism,--throbbing, alive, instinct with Spirit. The Spirit in nature, in Fairbairn's view, is God immanent: and if at times, especially in his idea of history, his thought was tinged with the notion of a nature sustained and carried on by a purblind life-force, his chief emphasis was placed against this notion and on the Christian doctrine of God immanent in nature as Providence. With his concept of Providence he repudiated the Deist notion that if God works in nature, it can be only through the marvelous and miraculous. The Archbishop of York has recently suggested[1] that it was a great advance in thought to 'see God at work, if at all, not only now and then, but everywhere and always'. It was the generation of theologians to which Fairbairn belonged who made this idea current in religious thought.

This conception of God as Providence continuously acting within nature was quite in accord with the monist trend throughout the century which issued in an extreme immanentism, often not far removed from pantheism.

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1. Op. cit., p. 47.

Fairbairn himself always retained in his thinking the orthodox idea of transcendence. Hence he did not give up the concept of miracle, nor wholly rationalize it by seeking to 'explain' what purported to be miracles in the Gospel records (for instance) in natural terms. The concept of miracle, so ably defended recently by Professor Farmer, is meant to establish that God, in addition to being immanent in nature, can act relevantly to a particular situation in response to a particular human need. Professor Farmer, in holding that nature (like man) is relatively independent from God, can give an apologetic for miracle far more adequate than Fairbairn's, since the latter considered nature wholly instrumental and completely dependent for its very being on the direct and continuous action or thought of God and man. Fairbairn also retained the belief in petitionary prayer, so largely rejected in his day and since then (when the main emphasis has been placed on prayer as communion). Petitionary prayer, as Farmer declares, is the heart of prayer and 'expresses the confidence that the ultimate reality of man's world is not uncongenial or unresponsive to his life task'.[1]

ii. Christianity and History.

Although Fairbairn stressed--unduly it would usually be admitted today--the speculative approach to religion, he was not carried to the extreme expressed in Fichte's words, 'Man is saved by the metaphysical element alone, and not by the historical'. Assuredly Fairbairn considered the metaphysical element essential, and criticised Newman for neglecting it. But if he received from Hegel the bias toward speculation in religion, he also got from the same source the marked bent toward approaching every subject from the historical point of view, which in our day has become second nature to the theologian. Thus Fairbairn would have said: the metaphysical is essential, but its roots

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1. The World and God, p. 142.

must be in history.

In addition to making what must still be recognized as a significant contribution to the history of Christological doctrine, his share in the strong emphasis given in the nineteenth century to the 'recovery of the historical Jesus' serves at the least as a salutary reminder that the present stress on the 'Word of God' is (as Professor D. M. Baillie has pointed out) a marked reaction (tending toward historical scepticism) to this earlier tendency to make much of the humanity of our Lord, to centre attention on the 'Jesus of history'. Already in 1903 Professor Webb gave some indication of this tendency toward historical scepticism when he wrote: 'I should myself (though I do not know how far Dr. Fairbairn would assent), unreservedly agree with Kant that the historical element is, as such, indifferent.'[1] Judging on the basis of Fairbairn's whole approach to the study of religion and specifically to the interpretation of our Lord, we can say that he would not have 'assented'.

It is generally acknowledged that to emphasize the historical basis of Christianity has again become of importance at the present time, in view of the Continental reaction from the extreme immanentism of the nineteenth century to the theology of transcendence, and of the Formgeschichte criticism. As Professor Dodd writes: 'The Bible, and the New Testament in particular, is not any longer to be treated as an historical corpus, revealing tendencies within history in which the immanent working of the divine is to be recognized. It is the Word of the transcendent God.' Against this tendency he stresses, however, that while some religions can be indifferent to historical fact, Christianity cannot, since it 'rests upon the affirmation that a series of events happened, in which God revealed Himself in action for the salvation of men'.[2] Similar assertions are made specifically in regard to Form criticism by J. A. Findlay (Jesus, Divine and Human) and by Principal Franks. The latter,

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1. Review of Philosophy, Jl. of Theo. Studies, p. 299.
2. History and the Gospel, pp. 13, 15.

writing as a theologian, sums up the matter as follows:[1]

> 'Scepticism about the essential content of the Synoptic narrative, both of the teaching and the main outline of the story of Jesus, seems to me unwarranted. I do not think that the recent study of Formgeschichte has been able to destroy the self-authentication as historical fact, alike of the teaching of Jesus as they give it, and of their story of how He came forward as the Prophet of the Kingdom of God; and was crucified because He claimed farther to be the expected Messiah of Israel. It is said that we only know Jesus through the primitive Church; and that the Synoptic Gospels themselves are evidence of Christian faith rather than simple histories. This is true; and yet the fact of Jesus shines through the faith of the early disciples: "That one Face, far from vanish, rather grows".'

It is only in a general way, however, that Fairbairn's emphasis on the Jesus of history would have relevance for our day, and this for definite reasons. The first has already been explained above (p. 55), namely, that Fairbairn's exegetical work failed to reckon with the latest New Testament scholarship of his own time. Upon occasion, too, he used the New Testament records rather to serve his arguments (e. g., in his exposition of the doctrine of the Church) than to interpret them in the light of their historical setting.

The 'historicism' of the nineteenth century, moreover, of which Fairbairn's work is a particular instance, has been repudiated as a method of approach to the interpretation of our Lord,—the first definite modifying influence having been the publication of Schweitzer's Quest of the Historical Jesus, which centred attention on the eschatological point of view. Attempts are no longer made to separate out the residuum of so-called historical facts about Jesus out of the Synoptic record, carefully distinguishing between such fact and accretions of Apostolic interpretation. The stress today is laid upon the broad religious significance of the Synoptic Gospels, not on the minutiae of the record. Furthermore, it is now recognized that the 'Jesus of history' and the 'Christ of faith' cannot be construed separately. They are, after all, the same Person. The New Testament records themselves were written

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1. The Atonement, pp. 32-3. It may be noted that Principal Franks would tend to lay less stress on the eschatological viewpoint, more on the 'teaching' of our Lord, than would most present-day interpreters of the New Testament.

'from faith to faith', and do not present us with two pictures of our Lord, as He really was when on earth (the human Jesus) and as speculatively construed by the Apostles (the Divine Christ). Rather is there a single impression of a Figure who through His life and death and resurrection generated faith in His Divine Sonship and Lordship among those who followed Him and who established the early Christian society.

> 'The historical origin of belief in the divinity of Christ is to be found . . . in the experience of the primitive Church after the Resurrection rather than in that of the disciples in the days when His godhead was so veiled that even the best of them failed to grasp it.' (1)

The whole impression given by Fairbairn's interpretation of Christ is that he chiefly conceived Him as a teacher--the supreme teacher, to be sure, of all time--of the Fatherhood of God; and hence, as Principal Dickie comments, 'the ultimate standard of Christian truth (for Fairbairn) is our Lord's personal message, as criticism restates it for us'.[2] The entire current of modern theological thought would turn away from Fairbairn's notion that the ideas of God, man and human destiny, which the historical Christ (as interpreted by His followers) sets forth to us, are of chiefest religious importance. The stress today falls rather on the Person Himself who made dogmatic claims for Himself and who qua Person, not qua idea conceived by the Apostles, confronts individuals now, producing and sustaining faith in Himself as the unique Son of God, who 'was made man' and in whose mind we see the mind of God, in whose 'life on earth we find implied in His deeds and words a character which is the character of God'.[3]

To be sure, Fairbairn considered Christ to be the only 'institution' of Christian worship. Yet essentially he conceived our Lord not so much as the object of Christian faith, but as 'ideal believer'[4] who set an example for

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1. Hodgson, And Was Made Man, p. 12.
2. Fifty Years of British Theology, p. 60.
3. Hodgson, And Was Made Man, p. 31.
4. Dickie, op. cit., p. 99.

all to follow who would, whose followers made His teaching the norm for all Christian experience. This trend of thought is brought into particularly clear focus in his conception of the meaning of the Eucharist, which he interpreted not as worship of God, but as preparation for such worship.

There is confusion, too, in Fairbairn's whole idea of the double nature of Christ. If, as he held, our Lord was conscious of His supernatural power and hence aware that He was the incarnate Son of God, then the 'veiling' was not real for Him. Yet Fairbairn insisted that He lived our life under the conditions of 'our common non-miraculous humanity' and hence was not omniscient. There seems to be in his interpretation a sharp cleavage between Christ as Son of Man and Son of God, almost as if at some times our Lord was Son of Man and then was supremely teacher of the Fatherhood of God, at other times Son of God who knew Himself to be the Messiah sent from God.[1] He presents no clear picture of One who was a <u>real</u> man and yet who gained knowledge through his experiences on earth (the only way, indeed, that a human being could gain knowledge),--knowledge of His unique relationship to the Father, which is probably the clearest feature of His character standing out from the Gospel records.

The modern interpretation of our Lord, then, (if indeed it be possible to generalize as widely as this), is that He really was God incarnate. Fairbairn specifically distinguished between this view and the one he himself held to be correct, that Christ was 'the incarnate Son of God', by which he meant that our Lord was the unique Son among many sons of man, the supreme personality in history, the apogean exemplar of the race, rather than that He is God incarnate, <u>the Word</u> made flesh. If the latter rather than Fairbairn's view is nearer the truth, it would also be necessary to admit that Christianity

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1. At times in Fairbairn's approach there is something of what Canon Hodgson calls the 'view of uncritical piety, which seems to believe that Christ's knowledge of things supernatural is due to His possession of divine omniscience in all its fullness, or to His power of drawing as it were on a store of memories of pre-incarnate existence'. (<u>And Was Made Man</u>, p. 52.)

does not stand as one among the historical religions (as Fairbairn always emphasized) nor that only after all the religions have been studied can Christianity be said to be supreme. Christianity will stand rather as the absolute, the final religion, not so much the ultimate religion among the religions as religion itself.[1]

iii. The Character of God.

A criticism levelled at Fairbairn's theology by those who knew him is that he always devoted too much time in his lectures and too many pages in his books to historical survey, not enough to construction.[2] One of his former students tells of waiting in a class at Mansfield through one whole term for construction, but all was devoted to history. At the beginning of the next term Fairbairn said, 'Before starting on construction we have a few historical points to clear up'. Eventually only about two lectures in the second term were devoted to construction.

If his chief contribution in theology was historical,--and his surveys may be considered in part as 'construction',--some of his emphases were significant for his day and will remain so. His fundamental tenet,--that the formal principle in theology is the consciousness of Christ and the material the Fatherhood of God,--was an important modification of the Reformation doctrine of making the Scriptures the formal principle. This stress on the consciousness of Christ as being determinative for Christian theology was probably the chief contribution of the nineteenth-century historicism to Christian doctrine.

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1. I think this idea has been expressed in these or similar words by Dean Inge, but I have been unable to trace the quotation.
2. From this point onward, some more detailed attention will be given to comparing and contrasting Fairbairn's thought with that of certain present-day theologians whom I consider representative. The first two sections in this chapter have been more general, since dealing more with the presuppositions than with his theology itself.

Fairbairn's stress on the Fatherhood of God as the central aspect of God's character and as regulating His Sovereignty will remain a cardinal principle for theologians whose primary emphasis falls rather on the Being than the Will of God. His endeavour, moreover, to hold together the attributes of Fatherhood and Sovereignty had even for his day a salutary effect, in that it helped to counterbalance the tendency of conceiving God as a benevolent and indulgent parent who humoured rather than ruled His children. At the same time it kept him from being carried into extreme immanentism, always made him emphasize that if God was in the world as Providence, He was also 'above' the world as Creator. This tension between the twin ideas of God in the battle who is also the God above the battle (in Lincoln's phrase) he consistently held. Not to let this tension between transcendence and immanence be resolved in an extreme emphasis on either has seemed to be the secret of keeping Christian theology from becoming pantheistic or libertarian on the one hand, or on the other Deistic or obscurantist.

In our own time the theology of transcendence has swung in extreme reaction against the predominant immanentism of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Professor Otto's emphasis on God as wholly Other came as a corrective (salutary if extreme, it probably would be generally admitted) to the idealist tendency to identify (so to say) God and man, at the least to over-emphasize the affinity between God and man without at the same time giving the orthodox Christian emphasis on man as fallen creature. Likewise the dialectic theologians with their dictum of Deus dixit and their absolute negating of human reason are in full flight from immanentism, returning in their basic point of view to the Ockhamist position. Against these tendencies the principles which Fairbairn laid down would in turn act as corrective,—his stress on the 'transcendent immanence' and the 'immanent transcendence' of God (to utilize Temple's illuminating phrases), as well as his more direct emphasis

against this voluntaristic extremism.

As Fairbairn was carried along, to some degree at least, in the immanentist stream of idealism, he himself fell into some of the extreme positions which, I take it, British theological thought even now is trying to correct. One of these extremes was characteristic of the activist Protestantism which in Britain became practically a school under the leadership of the late Canon Streeter, namely, a predominant emphasis on man's freedom of choice. Man's free-will was a cardinal principle with Fairbairn, as with other late nineteenth century thinkers (Martineau being a notable example). In his eagerness to repudiate determinism in any form (a necessary part of his apologetic against naturalism, so he thought), he neglected all predestination and resolved too easily the antinomy in all theology between free-will and predestination.

In one of his'Studies' Fairbairn pointed out that the difference between the responses to our Lord of the two thieves who hung on crosses with Jesus (the unrepentent one Fairbairn pictured as having been born in a robber's cave, the penitent thief as reared in a home where he received religious instruction but who had 'gone wrong') 'so far as their evil is concerned, must be sought in themselves, though the source of all good is to be found in God'.[1] In this illustration the chief difficulty of the indeterminist position is seen, since it must be admitted that determinism at least in a broad way does mark out the lines a life follows. Surely in Fairbairn's example it could hardly be allowed that the unrepentent thief chose to be born in a robbers' cave. In this respect his final 'synthesis' seems to glide over the freedom-determinism problem.

Not only does Fairbairn seem to slough off the doctrine of original sin: but in taking his activist stand he seems to be allowing that man has considerably more than relative independence from God. As a matter of fact,

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1. Studies, p. 467.

he himself urged that the 'energy' of the scientists was actually the Will of God. Canon Hodgson stresses the same idea (covering new approaches to this question which have been made) when he urges that we should regard 'that fount of energy, described variously as libido, elan vital, life stream, or what not, as the active will of God'.[1] If this is the correct view to hold, it must further follow, as Fairbairn pointed out, that we must consider human freedom of choice as a prerequisite to the making of character and hence as a necessary part of God's plan for the world.

Canon Hodgson makes the further important distinction, however, that freedom of choice is but imperfect freedom: the emphasis should be placed on that perfect freedom which is complete obedience to the Will of God. In this perspective, it will continue to be important to assert the freedom of the human will (as we have seen in this century in the contention of theologians with the 'new psychology', in its behaviourist tendency, either general or in the specific form of psychoanalysis): yet the stress will lie not on this libertas minor, which at best is but a means, but on the perfect obedience to God's Will which alone is perfect freedom. The freedom of choice which Fairbairn emphasized,--the freedom of activism,--is 'inchoate, imperfect and irrational'.[1] It is this freedom of indeterminism which ultimately makes the universe undependable if the perfect freedom of God does not underlie it. In 1893 a critic of Fairbairn wrote: 'However great and painful are the mysteries of the Calvinistic doctrine of the divine sovereignty, the alternative view, which implies that the issue of the world's history is dependent on the wills of men, seems to me more devoid of comfort, or in some respects positively appalling.'[2] Probably most theologians would admit the very real difficulty with any view of human freedom which does not carry with it at the same time the doctrine of the Divine overruling: and it was just this doctrine which Fairbairn could never admit in its

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1. Essays in Christian Philosophy, pp. 33, 43.
2. J. S. Candlish in a review of Place of Christ, Crit. Rev., Vol. III, p. 374.

full force into his thinking.

It has been pointed out that Fairbairn was opposed to extreme Christocentrism, exemplified in the Ritschlians of his day or the Barthians of our own time. Professor Taylor has suggested that Baron von Hügel gave what he considers 'a wise and timely warning against this type of theology (i. e., the Christocentric) in the essay on "Suffering and God". 'But to me the most significant thing about his admirable essay . . . is that the warning should have been felt by the author to be so imperatively needed. It could only be necessary in an age which ascribes to process and temporality a significance very different from that given to them in any Hellenic philosophy'.[1]

Fairbairn's stress on the passibility of God, while quite out of keeping with the 'Greek' bent of his mind and with his aversion for excessive Christocentricism, was yet reflecting the mind of his generation and century, which ascribed great significance to 'process and temporality'.[2] Although he never discussed the subject of time,--an omission from his writing which Professor Webb criticised over thirty years ago and which would certainly be criticised in the present day when time is considered by many to be the most urgent philosophical problem,--yet his immanentism showed itself clearly enough in his this-worldliness; and as we have seen, one aspect of this general point of view is his consistent arguing against the doctrine of Divine impassibility.

There are certain problems for all who hold with Fairbairn the conception of a passible God. Fairbairn at least did not give them adequate attention. For the most part they fall on the side of immanentism, of identifying too closely the Divine and human natures, a tendency which he shared with his generation. (1) There is first the notion that there can be no real compassio without passio, either in God or man: yet the preponderance of

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1. Op. cit, vol. II, p. 324. .
2. Some of the emphases of the epoch included: the Kingdom of God to be established in this world through the 'social' activities (concluded on next page)

evidence, when judged purely on the basis of man's response to suffering, seems to array itself against the soundness of this idea. (2) Suffering, though it can be made an agent for good, can so be made only when it is indubitably recognized that per se it is intrinsically always radically evil. To allow, then, that there is suffering in God is to admit limitation into His nature. Further to argue that it is self-limitation on His part,--a necessary concomitant of creating beings with a relative freedom,--hardly mitigates the difficulty of giving up the idea of perfection in God. The notion of limitation of His omnipotence by granting a relative freedom to man is itself made of lesser account by the doctrine of Divine over-ruling. But the doctrine of a passible God seems to admit evil and hence finitude to the very heart (as it were) of the Divine nature. Nor can suffering be admitted into the Being of God, without at once lessing the unrelieved badness of evil, always a characteristic of immanentism.[1] Fairbairn, too, it will be remembered, despite his avowed intention to stress the unmitigated evil-ness of evil, could fall, possibly unconsciously, into speaking of the 'accident of sin'.

(3) The trend shown clearly in Fairbairn or in Martineau, for example, and later by those activists who grouped themselves about the late Canon Streeter, was to lay a strongly marked emphasis on freedom in man and on the possibility of evil being a necessary concomitant of freedom. As we have seen, however, perfect freedom (the libertas major of God) excludes choice, even as perfect freedom in man would be complete obedience to the Will of God. In this view good and evil are made necessary concomitants of each other: we can have either or neither, 'but we cannot have one without the other'.[2] This view, however, like Calvinist voluntarism, makes God subject to the libertas minor: He is bound to His Will rather than to His nature. This view also makes evil

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(continued from previous page) of men; man to achieve character through fighting temptation at every cross-roads of choice, etc.

1. Von Hügel quotes Dr. Edw. Lyttelton, for example, as asserting that we should 'see sin and all evil as a good disguised by our own wrong thinking'. "Suffering and God" in Essays and Addresses, second series, p. 174.
2. Ibid, p. 203.

in God potential, both suffering and sin: if He does not sin (if we may so express it) it is because He chooses not to, rather than that by His very nature He cannot.

(4) Finally those who argue for a passible God do not seem sufficiently to retain in their thinking the tension--orthodox to Christianity--between transcendence and immanence in God,--faith in God who is 'both universal and individual, both absolute and personal'.[1] The immanentism integral to the notion of passibility in God tends to lose personality in God and man (as among the neo-Hegelians) or to build up the concept of personality in God wholly from the notion of personality in man (and thus including suffering in the nature of God, since it plays so large a part in 'making' personality in man).[2]

Immanentism, then, tends on the one hand to make God impersonal or finite (a 'struggling God' subject to the libertas minor), or on the other to tone down the badness of evil. The chief problem for those who argue against Fairbairn's view of Divine passibility, as I see it, is that they tend to establish a metaphysical dualism between the two natures of Christ,--a concept which is more than difficult in view of the present understanding of the nature of the self. Yet this is a problem which has faced Christianity from the start, and it seems doubtful if the immanentist attempt at solution does not raise more problems than it solves.

Fairbairn himself, while stressing the idea of a suffering God, clung to the idea of transcendence: God for him was infinite, absolute, and personal. Yet he made no particular effort to reconcile his notion of Divine passibility with that of God transcendent, did not take account of the problems consequent upon the idea of a suffering God.

Earlier we noticed that the idea of Divine passibility for Fairbairn

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1. John Baillie, Interpretation of Religion, p. 398.
2. In the development of these four points, I have closely followed von Hügel's discussion in the essay quoted.

(and others who hold this view) was a necessary corollary of the doctrine of the Atonement: that is to say, Christ on the Cross revealed to man the awfulness of sin through showing forth the suffering that sin caused God. In this way, according to his central idea of the Atonement, he held that men are won back to fellowship with God through catching a vision--as they see Christ on His Cross--a vision of the depth of the richness of the love in God's fatherly nature. If there were no suffering in God, according to his view, the work of Christ in His death could not be efficacious.

Fairbairn held a modified Abelardian view of the redeeming work of Christ. In 'looking backwards' at his doctrine of the Atonement, it may be considered in contrast and comparison with several representative views held by contemporaries. Principal Franks with inexorable logic and pellucid clarity develops the Abelardian conception of the Atonement with thorough-going consistency.

> 'It is the doctrine,' he writes, 'that Christ reconciles men to God by revealing the love of God in His life and still more in His death, so bringing them to trust and love Him in return.' (1)

He rejects the Greek and Latin theories of the Atonement, and allows that such terms as 'satisfaction', 'ransom', and 'propitiation' are meaningful only as 'illustrations'.

In addition to this experiential theory of the Atonement, three other theories (following Franks' useful classification) have recently been expounded:

> 'They are the Greek or Patristic theory of recapitulation, or alternatively of ransom; the Latin theory of satisfaction and merit; and the theory of arbitrary sovereignty.' (2)

The extreme voluntaristic theory based on the Divine Sovereignty has no connection with Fairbairn's theology, since as we have seen he wholly repudiated this Ockhamist tendency in theological thinking. This theory is followed by

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1. The Atonement, p. 2.
2. Ibid, p. 175.

Professor Brunner in The Mediator. The Greek theory has been re-interpreted by Bishop Aulén, but this theory too Fairbairn would have repudiated, although at times the notion of recapitulation crept into his thinking.

With the Latin theory it is somewhat different, since Fairbairn not infrequently used substitutionary and forensic terminology. It is possible, as Rashdall suggested in 1903, that Fairbairn 'would doubtless be the first to repudiate' such theories 'if stated in black and white'.[1] To take his writing at face value as it stands, however, it is certainly true that he carried some ideas of penal substitution in his thinking which kept him from being wholly consistent in setting forth the Abelardian view. For this reason we may consider briefly the theory of the Atonement as propounded by Canon Hodgson, who tells us that

> 'we may accept the positive teaching of the Abelardian view and then go on to ask whether its negative teaching, its denial that there is anything further to be said about the Atonement, is justified.' (2)

Canon Hodgson explains five difficulties to accepting the Abelardian view as complete; and if these difficulties are admitted, it might be argued that Fairbairn was not merely inconsistent or 'walking in two directions at the same time' in presenting his own view of the Atonement,--although he did not elaborate his theory sufficiently to make it possible to tell whether he actually tried to modify the Abelardian view or whether he merely carried over from his early Calvinism certain notions which he never fitted into his system of theology.

Canon Hodgson states (1) a practical difficulty to maintaining that the Abelardian theory is adequate: if the preacher fails to awaken a response to the proclamation of God's love, he has failed completely; whereas if he can point to something objective achieved by Christ on His Cross, the listener may at least carry away the idea that something was done 'once for all' for him,

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1. Hibbert Jl., op. cit., p. 181.
2. And Was Made Man, p. 88.

and a response on his part may be evoked by reflection on this fact.[1] (2) If the significance of Christ's work on the Cross is restricted to its subjective effect on the part of the individual Christian, Canon Hodgson points out that all people not believers are excluded, so to say, from the benefits of that work. Thus would be excluded people who because of intellectual doubts have been unable to join the Church, or persons to whom the Gospel has never been preached. Yet this would exclude people like Dr. Jacks' shoemaker, who 'spent his breath in proving that God doesn't exist, and his life in proving that He does'.[2] Moreover, if the many who have not heard the Gospel preached are to be condemned, Canon Hodgson suggests we are reverting to an immoral notion of predestination; or, if they are not to be condemned, are giving the Incarnation a very insignificant place in the Divine plan for the world.

(3) People who believe and are truly penitent but have difficulty in believing they are really forgiven would be helped if the 'objective accomplishment' on the Cross could be pointed out to them. (4) According to the Abelardian theory of the Atonement, God suffers because man sins. But it fails to answer the question, 'Why does sin make God suffer?' (5) Finally Canon Hodgson challenges the basic premise of the whole Abelardian theory: 'Is it true that the state of the sinner's soul is all that has to be put right?' Even after the sinner has repented, he still needs to be convinced that 'God has neither connived at his sin, nor been worsened by it'. Canon Hodgson maintains that our Lord accomplished this two-fold work on the Cross.

> 'In the pain and suffering which He endured we see the divine repudiation of sin; in the manner in which He endured it ("Father, forgive them") we see His absorption of its power for evil. Because

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1. Franks, it should be noted, objects to labelling the Abelardian theory 'subjective'. 'It is in truth fundamentally objective, inasmuch as God, Christ, His Cross, and the Divine love are all the objects of human trust and responsive love.' Hence he calls it the experiential theory, 'since the term experience implies both object and subject and the relation between them'. (op. cit., p. 4.)
2. Mad Shepherds and other Human Studies, p. 25.

> in Him we see God we can believe that in spite of our sins God remains good and victorious over the power of evil.' (1)

Fairbairn wished to retain in his doctrine of the Atonement both the notion of the 'objective something' accomplished once for all on the Cross: he also tried to hold to the idea of penal substitution. Principal Franks maintains that such notions represent pre-Christian elements: to think of a 'cosmic act' without specific reference to the sinner's response is but to think in terms of magic, he holds. The idea of penal substitution he criticises when he argues against the conceptions of vicarious suffering and vicarious penitence on the part of Christ (as held respectively by Campbell and Moberly).

> 'These modern doctrines are still based on the notion of making sin forgivable, which abstracts from the personality of the sinner, and so misses the true problem which is to make the sinner forgivable.' (2)

Of these two contemporary points of view, then, I take it that Principal Franks would criticise Fairbairn for inconsistency, for not excluding more rigidly from the exposition elements which he would consider non-Christian; and that Canon Hodgson would allow that possibly Fairbairn, consciously or not, was modifying his Abelardian view in order to meet difficulties and problems in the theological interpretation of the Divine-human relationship which a thoroughly consistent Abelardian theory of the Atonement overlooks.

iv. The Church.

It would generally be conceded that Fairbairn was 'angularly Protestant'. He was completely out of sympathy with Catholicism,—its polity, its idea of 'orders', its mode of worship. He had, moreover, as Principal Dickie has suggested, 'perhaps greater faith in Congregationalism as the ideal form of Church polity than is usual nowadays'.[3]

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1. The quotations in this paragraph are taken from And Was Made Man, pp. 92, 95, 97. The five points are stated in Ch. V, section iii.
2. Op. cit., p. 184.
3. Op., cit., p. 61.

When viewing Fairbairn's ecclesiology in connection with the rather considerable amount of thought which has been directed upon the whole question of the Church and its function (as, for instance, in the preparatory work for the Oxford Conference, 1937, and the discussion there), it becomes apparent that he really had no doctrine of the Church. Even in 1898, in reviewing Fairbairn's Catholicism, Rashdall made this criticism of Fairbairn,--a shrewd comment for a time when there was 'an almost general agreement in laying the emphasis on the conception of the Church as a religious association', when 'the whole conception of the Church was individualistic, democratic and atomistic'.[1]

Rashdall criticised Fairbairn for belittling the visible Church and using all terms such as 'institutional', 'ecclesiastical' and 'organized' in a disparaging way, pointing out that though the Church is an ideal which has never been fully embodied in any single human society, yet it was meant to be so embodied, which at once means there must be organization. Rashdall himself was a non-sacerdotalist, but he maintained that Fairbairn's criticism missed its mark in tending to identify the Church with the clergy and in failing to realize that the chief purpose of the Tractarian movement (in all its phases) was to establish a more meaningful conception of the Church. This emphasis on an 'inspired authoritative Church', in Rashdall's opinion, was an advance on the historical Protestant conception of an inspiration based solely on an infallible Bible. Fairbairn, to be sure, did not follow this orthodox Protestant point of view. But Rashdall held that he also did not offer suggestions toward clarifying and elevating the conception of the Church, but rather threw aside the concept as useless (so to say) and argued for a sheer religious individualism.[2]

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1. T' Hooft and Oldham, The Church and its Function in Society, p. 23.
2. In this connection Principal Garvie suggests that Fairbairn 'does not give due consideration to the conception of the Church in its unity and continuity as an historical reality, imperfectly manifesting the invisible Church, and yet functioning diversely in the visible churches.'(Lond.Quat.,op. cit., p.35)

Rashdall further pointed out that in arguing against the Anglican Church as it was in actuality but for the Congregational polity in ideal, he quite over-looked or at least failed to acknowledge the Church reforms which at that time were being advocated by high churchmen, and did not recognize the influence on Anglicanism of Reformation ideas which had gradually seeped into the Church of England. (One specific reform which was being suggested in High Church circles was the participation of the laity in Church government.) As a matter of fact, Rashdall argued that a high view of the visible Church need not necessarily be linked 'with such notions as a mechanical apostolic succession or with the belief in sacramental magic . . . They are no more necessary to a high view of the importance of the religious society--yes, if you like, of an "organized" society and an "institutional" Christianity--than a high view of the State is dependent on mythical theories of divine right or social contract.'[1]

Because of Rashdall's general sympathy with Fairbairn's point of view, his criticism in this regard is of especial significance. Professor Webb also criticised Fairbairn (in 1903) for his lack of understanding of Catholicism as 'a certain turn or habit of mind in religious matters . . . which is passionately sensible to the solemn atmosphere of a sacramental system charged with the sacred associations of an ancient ritual, wherein the sorrows and the aspirations, the penitence and the triumph, of a fellowship to which we ourselves also belong, are as it were enshrined.'[2] Professor Webb is careful to point out that this temper is not particularly Christian,--may indeed be a hindrance to developing the Christian temper: but the same holds true for Fairbairn's characteristic attitude of marked antipathy to all sacramentalism.

No doubt Fairbairn's tendency to set ideas in sharp antithesis, --to be noted in his style of writing as in all his thinking,--led him often

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1. Review of Catholicism, Crit. Rev., Vol. IX, 1899, p. 217.
2. Jl. of Theo. Studies, op. cit., p. 298.

into extremist positions, and nowhere more markedly than in developing his ecclesiology. He set in antithesis, for instance, 'knowledge and thought' against 'institutions and offices',—a distinction which surely has little meaning when viewed even in the pragmatic light of the consistent contributions to religious thought made through the nineteenth century by the Broad Church leaders, who certainly did not repudiate 'institutions and offices' in the Church, as well as by the High Church theologians towards the end of the Victorian era,—even if granting the very dubious admission that the early Tractarians made no such contributions but only stimulated, as Fairbairn did not fail to point out time and again, the religious life of England.[1]

Principal Garvie recently has asserted that Fairbairn 'again and again . . . opposes, and overstates the opposition of prophet and priest, person and institution, spiritual and sensuous, in asserting his Protestantism, and assailing every type of Catholicism'.[2] Fairbairn himself, even while declaring that a minister can in no wise be considered as having priestly functions, inadvertently spoke of the minister when leading his people in public prayer as standing 'in their place' and pleading 'in their name before God'. In this connection Principal Garvie, speaking as an Independent Protestant, suggests that priestly as well as prophetic functions can be delegated to a minister by a local congregation, which in this respect, according to Congregational polity, acts as the Church universal. Although he further states that 'no priest nor prophet can claim an exclusive mediation of the truth or grace of Christ', yet he also stresses that he 'cannot see how a delegated mediation is contrary to the Christian Gospel.'[3] Nor will he grant that Fairbairn's

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1. It may be observed that Fairbairn inveighed against Tractarian scholarship because it was based, he maintained, on 'presuppositions'. Professor Brunner recently has argued against the notion of 'voraussetzungslose Erkenntnis' in Der Mensch in Widerspruch, pp. 45 ff. From this point of view Fairbairn himself approached all historical questions with the presuppositions of a Free Churchman.
2. Lond. Quat., op. cit., p. 34.
3. Ibid, p. 35.

antithesis between spiritual and sensuous is sound, since all worship in being symbolical must to a degree express itself through the senses.

> 'In preaching the Gospels, physical organs are employed no less than in the administration of the sacraments. . . If the prophetic function of declaring the Word of God can be committed to the Christian minister, may not the priestly function of conducting the worship be entrusted to him also?' (1)

In respect to his attitude toward the Eucharist Professor Webb pointed out that in denying that it was an institution for worship Fairbairn was not being true to his own principles. For on the basis of his interpretation of our Lord, where he insisted that not only the historical events of the life of Jesus but especially those events as interpreted by His followers should provide the content of Christianity, a thing must be judged not only in view of its beginnings but of what it has become,--and this was a fundamental principle in all of Fairbairn's work. Thus the question in this connection, according to Professor Webb,

> 'as of Christianity in general, so of the rite in which Christian worship is concentrated, is not what, if we ignore its subsequent development, we can descry it to have been in its beginnings, so much as what in the life and thought of the community it has become.' As with our interpretation of Christ, so 'in a secondary way we may say of the Eucharist, too, that in fairness this too should be contemplated, not as an isolated rite, but in the light of the meaning which it has gathered around it, of the ideas which it has come to symbolize: and what is true of the Eucharist in particular is true of the system of which it is the centre.' (2)

In addition to these criticisms, Fairbairn's conception of Christian worship should be considered in relation to a symposium which has recently appeared and which sets forth a representative Free Church view of worship for the present day. The symposium, as its editor points out, seeks to present a 'systematic study of Public Worship', partly historical, partly interpretative,--and as interpretation to serve 'as a vindication of the common tradition of our Reformed Churches'.[3]

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1. Lond. Quat., op. cit., pp. 34, 35.
2. Jl. of Theo. Studies, op. cit., p. 299.
3. N. Micklem, ed., Christian Worship, p. vii.

Professor Dodd in his interpretation of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper as 'the sacrament of a transformed eschatology' stresses its two primary aspects, remembrance and communion: remembrance in the sense of recalling in the Sacrament that the Christian faith is rooted in specific historical acts and facts, communion in the sense of being a rite symbolizing to communicants the sacramental nature of the universe. 'The very act of taking food is a symbol of the fact that we live by that which we receive from the great universe beyond us.' Hence we acknowledge the dependence of the Self on the Not-self, which is the beginning of religion. Moreover, 'the partaking of good <u>together</u> is a symbol of the fact that we share with one another the life that we derive from the universe, or the power behind it.' Professor Dodd further points out that the death of Christ, which sealed the sacrificial self-dedication of His life ('that it may be communicated to men') is related to the Sacrament, in which 'we accept that which God gives, become that which He makes of us (by grace, not by merit), and render it up to Him. Worship is here that which ideally it must be--the return to God of that which came from God.'[1] In contrast with Fairbairn's assertion that the Lord's Supper is not worship of God at all, this re-interpretation of the meaning of the Sacrament strikingly reveals the change which has taken place among Free Church thinkers.

For Fairbairn the chief act of Christian worship was the preaching of the Word. Stress is still placed on preaching, but it is not set in opposition to but made ancillary to the duties of the minister as priest. Mr. Edward Shillito, in fact, speaks of preaching as the administration of a Sacrament, 'wherein God deals with man as a reasonable being'.[2]

Principal Micklem in his essay on "The Sacraments" points out that only in historic Protestantism have the Sacraments always been conjoined with

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1. <u>Christian Worship</u>, pp. 79, 80, 82.
2. <u>Ibid</u>, p. 218.

the Word and hence only there have they not been 'degraded either to a mere symbolism or to an impersonal operation'. Fairbairn's inveighing against sacerdotalism, it will be remembered, was especially directed against the notion that man can take the initiative in the Divine-human relationship; and Principal Micklem makes this same emphasis, asserting, however, that God's action can take place in or through the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

> 'But it belongs to our tradition and to the truth of the Gospel to lay all the stress upon the action of the living God. It is God who calls and regenerates, He who comes and gives Himself to us. His action is first and last; our worship is but Antwort to His Wort, an answer to His Word.'

In this view the Sacraments are considered as being rather a corporate than an individual act, and chiefly a 'bequest'.

> 'They are the acts of God in His Church, whereby the opus operatum of Christ, never to be repeated, is, as it were, extended and brought home to believers.' At the Sacraments of the Word 'time is, as it were, rolled up, and that which in ordinary human experience we know as successive is seen in the eternal simultaneity of heaven. . . . the whole drama of Redemption is, as it were, present together before our eyes as visibly occurrent, and the promise of our own inheritance is sealed by the Lord Himself upon our wondering hearts.' (1)

Judging by this whole point of view, we may say that the Free Churches in Britain have been moving away from the extreme Protestant position represented by Fairbairn, or rather have re-interpreted historical Protestantism in a different dimension, as it were, from that understood by Fairbairn. This trend of thought shows, as Dr. Visser t' Hooft says, that 'the influence of the Catholic conceptions of the relations of nature and grace, and of the sacramental character of all life, has permeated many sections of British Christianity, whether they be nominally Catholic or nominally Protestant.'[2] This movement, and that described in an Outline of a Reunion Scheme for the Church of England and the Evangelical Free Churches of England (first published in February, 1938), I take it, Fairbairn would not have encouraged, except

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1. Christian Worship, pp. 243, 244, 256.
2. Op. cit., p. 72.

in so far as he repudiated the position he consistently defended in his writings.

In viewing Fairbairn's ecclesiology as a whole, it would probably be admitted that its chief value lay in making sharply definitive the extreme Independent Protestant position. In this extreme position, the Independent Church must be considered, as Dr. Visser t' Hooft has indicated, rather as 'sects' than as Churches, since 'the voluntary element in their structure is stronger than the institutional one'. These Churches, moreover, 'have given the most cordial reception to that particular theology which is characterized by an active concern for the transformation of social institutions in accordance with what is believed to be God's Will, and by an evolutionary view of human history.'[1] With the shift in emphasis in Christian worship described above, however, has developed a marked stress on the conception of the Church visible --and its importance as such--as the embodiment of the invisible Church. At the same time the Independent Church has not lost its social emphasis.

Possibly the most significant factor about these changes and their relation to Fairbairn is that contemporary theologians (like Fairbairn) strongly affirm and base their re-interpretations of doctrine upon historic Protestantism.

v. The Kingdom of God.

It is not surprising that Fairbairn's optimistic interpretation of Christianity as a 'social gospel', the principles of which when more widely accepted would inevitably result in the establishment of the Kingdom of God as an earthly society, should fall somewhat flatly on modern ears. This somewhat blithe, evolutionary eschatology seems to have no point of contact whatever with (for example) Professor Niebuhr's 'reflections on the end of an era' or with M. Berdyaev's 'end of our time'. The latter writes, 'More keenly than ever I feel that night and shadow are descending on the world, just as

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1. Op. cit., pp. 53-4.

was the case at the beginning of the Middle Ages, before the medieval Renaissance.'[1] This is indeed a far cry from the jaunty optimism of the nineteenth century.

That the Church has something to say in regard to the problems of social life, that the Christian ethic has at least some relevance for the problems of class and international conflicts, would still be generally recognized, especially in the English-speaking world. Thus far at least Fairbairn's emphasis on Christianity as essentially social in nature continues to have significance. 'Christianity is in its very essence the hope of an ideal society,' writes Professor Baillie. But the wide divergence from Fairbairn's Utopian conception of the Kingdom is seen when Professor Baillie continues: 'But it is a society which it is wrong to expect could ever come about under present earthly conditions.'[2]

It is not possible here to trace the profound changes which have come about in the conception of the Christian social ideal since Fairbairn's time,—through Troelsch, the early period of the 'social gospel' (characterized in the United States by mentioning the names of Rauschenbusch and Gladden), and the time of disillusionment following the Great War. M. Maritain has pointed with deep insight to the three chief 'moments' in the dissolution of 'this proud anthropocentric personality' of post-Renaissance times (who still stood erect before the universe and his Creator in the late Victorian era): (1) the general acceptance of the Darwinian hypothesis of the simian origin of man; (2) the development of the Freudian psychology which revealed the true nature of the inner life of man to himself; and (3) the 'revolutionary moment' when all values have been 'reversed'.[3] By giving some further attention to two aspects of this change, however, the true nature of the difference between

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1. The Fate of Man in the Modern World, p. 7.
2. Address on "The Church", delivered at Swanwick, January, 1938.
3. Op. cit, pp. 20 ff.

Fairbairn's and the present Christian social ethic will be seen more clearly.

In an essay on "Tolstoi and Jesus", significantly written in 1919, Dr. Heim pointed to the fallacy in the 'perfectionist' ethic of the nineteenth century by referring to Luther's discovery in the monastery he had entered to escape the conflict between the Christian ethic and the world. Dr. Heim writes of Luther:[1]

> 'Er merkte, mit allen diesen Anstrengungen können wir unser eigenes Ich nicht besiegen, das immer sich selber sucht. Wir können nicht anders, als uns selber lieben. Auch wenn wir auf Ehe, Eigentum und Selbstbehauptung völlig verzichten, immer schleicht sich der Gedanke in unsere Seele: Wie heilig bin ich doch, wie hoch stehe ich über allen anderen!'

It is this poignant realization that self-love cannot be overcome,--that the tension between the Christian ideal on the one hand and on the other the persistent self-assertion of the I,--that has wrought such a total eclipse of the Victorian world-view. It is the awareness of the reality of original sin again coming into the focus of attention. Man may know that a corollary of love to God must always be love to his fellows: but the knowledge does not lead, as Fairbairn was inclined to think it would, to ethical action on the part of man. Nor can man be persuaded, as Fairbairn thought he could, to give up of his own free will financial or political power he has garnered, when he is shown the social injustices involved in such centralization of power. Nor is the extreme individualism issuing from Fairbairn's interpretation of Protestantism an adequate basis for a social ethic which shall in some way be made relevant to the corporate sin of man. Nor can man, by striving to imitate our Lord, become a 'little Christ'. All these propositions are consequent upon the Christian doctrine of man as held by pre-Renaissance Christian theologians and by the Reformers: the doctrine, that is, that man is creature and hence finite, that man is sinful by nature and inextricably involved in the corporate sin of the

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1. Glaube und Leben, p. 307.

race. The theology of transcendence, by its very extremism, has led Christian thought in this regard back to orthodoxy.

Certainly it would be generally held that Fairbairn's emphasis on the indissoluble connection between religion and morality--steadily maintained in the face of nineteenth century attempts wholly to secularize morality--was sound. 'It is true without qualification,' writes Professor Nygren, 'that Christian ethics are religious ethics.'[1] And Professor Baillie asserts that 'the attempt to divorce morality from religion and form it into an independent province was . . . the last absurdity of modern humanism.'[2] But modern thought for the most part, I take it, would not follow Fairbairn in his attempt to interpret the 'teachings' of Jesus (specifically the Sermon on the Mount) as an ethical code of action for everyday life which man through his efforts can more and more nearly approximate in his social relationships. Professor Dibelius has referred to the Sermon on the Mount as 'not an ideal but an "eschatological stimulus"'.[3] In this view the Christian ethic is not an ideal which can be realized in this life. The 'law of the Kingdom is not a positive code, but an Absolute which by its very nature must be transcendent. In this world man by striving cannot overcome his finiteness and be 'made perfect'. Yet man must continue to use the law of the Kingdom as a 'principle of judgment' in judging among the relativities of this life. This is the constant 'relevance of an impossible ethical ideal', to use Professor Niebuhr's telling phrase. The early Christians, while fully realizing the eschatological nature of the Kingdom, 'from the very beginning endeavoured to apply the laws of the Kingdom of God to their own little earthly society, as far as they could be applied under existing earthly conditions'.[4] But they did not resolve the tension be-

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1. Agape and Eros, p. 68.
2. "The Church", p. 7.
3. Quoted in Ibid, p. 9.
4. Ibid, p. 10.

tween the Absolute ethical ideal and the relativities of the world and hence did not seek to dissolve the human dilemma of being set in two worlds. As Professor Niebuhr writes,[1]

> 'There is, in short, no problem of history and no point in society from which one may not observe that the same man who touches the fringes of the infinite in his moral life remains imbedded in finiteness, that he increases the evil in his life if he tries to overcome it without regard to his limitations. Therefore it is as important to know what is impossible as what is possible in the moral demands under which all human beings stand.'

The difficulties in Fairbairn's approach to Christian ethics, when considered from this point of view, lie just here: that he failed to see this tension between the Absolute and relative, that he did not take into account the poignancy of the human dilemma, that he did not realize that man, since finite, cannot achieve perfection--at least in this world. In seeking to make the Kingdom of God a Kingdom of this world, he failed to comprehend that it is essentially 'an order for which we must wait'.[2] He tried, indeed, to make the Christian ethic relevant for every social relationship, but in seeking to make it directly applicable he lost the tension between its absoluteness and the relativities of human existence. 'And the tension between this absolute point of reference and the limited possibilities and necessities of our earthly situation is a tension that can never be relaxed so long as earthly life shall last.'[2]

What is of permanent value in Fairbairn's thought has emerged through the course of this chapter, and it is not necessary to re-state it here. If we are not apt to turn for guidance to his writings in our day, it is not so much because he has nothing to teach us as that he did not

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1. An Interpretation of Christian Ethics, p. 135.
2. John Baillie, op. cit., p. 12.

elaborate his thought into a system definitive enough to lend a marked direction to theological thought. Furthermore, the general theological outlook has changed so radically that his speculative approach to religion seems to have little relevance for our day. At the same time we do well to recall the vigour of his theological thought, robust bécause undergirt by a vibrant faith which lived in the world of men where it had constantly to give a reasoned defence of itself. His apologetic for the Christian faith met that world with elemental power.

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